

A DELL BOOK

DELL

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THE LAST EXPRESS

A DUNCAN MACLAIN DETECTIVE STORY

Baynard Kendrick



COMPLETE WITH CRIME MAP ON BACK COVER

A DELL MYSTERY





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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

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THE LAST EXPRESS

Persons this *Mystery* is about—

EVELYN ZARINKA,
a pretty, smartly dressed young lady whose brown hair is carefully coifed and whose white, even teeth are complemented by full, red lips and a small, strong chin.

PAUL ZARINKA,
Evelyn's brother, is just past thirty and very good-looking. He serves as assistant district attorney for the Homicide Division, where he has always been a careful and successful worker.

CHARLES HARTSHORN,
a personable young man in his late twenties, is engaged to Evelyn Zarinka. He has lived a life of consistent correctness, and his affability endears him to many a Park Avenue hostess. Despite a very comfortable income and a full social life, he has a capability for many things.

CAPTAIN DUNCAN MACLAIN,
erect and handsome, is a truly amazing gentleman. Despite the fact that he is totally and hopelessly blind, he is a most accurate and self-confident detective. With his dog Schnucke and his partner Spud Savage, he is a threat to crime in all quarters.

SPUD SAVAGE,
more properly known as Samuel, is Captain Maclain's friend and partner. He has peculiar yellow eyes and a slow grin. Spud is a natural athlete. His business acumen, however, is not to be disparaged. He is a fearless detective and his devotion to his boss is great.

HOWARD HEWITT,
five feet eleven and dark, has a nose that is slightly crooked from a football accident. He is an engineer as well as a politician and clever at both occupations. He is a pleasant duck usually, but high tempered when he is mad.

GILBERT FOX,
built on the lines of the late Rudolph Valentino, is an electrical engineer and a good friend of Hewitt's. He is unmarried, brilliant, and very successful.

CLAUDE DEARBORN,
immaculate, gray-coated District Attorney, has pleasant gray eyes and an ominously calm bearing. He is a man with powerful friends and equally powerful enemies.

SPRINGER,
constant companion of the D.A., is a blunt, tight-lipped fellow. His face is as expressionless as the butt end of a cartridge, but he is reputed to know the history of every man and woman in the country with a police record. With his .38 he can hit a quarter tossed in the air.

MADONNA,
a sweet-faced boy who looks to be in his early teens—except for his eyes which approach perfect roundness so closely as to be bizarre and are partly covered with film. He has a constant expression of amazement—like a fish finding itself out of water.

THE LAST EXPRESS

Things this *Mystery* is about—

A jigsaw PUZZLE . . .

Two white MICE in a birdcage . . .

A Mills HAND GRENADE . . .

A few MARIHUANA cigarettes . . .

A slim, shiny DAGGER . . .

A disused TUNNEL . . .

A Seeing Eye DOG . . .

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A CAPTAIN DUNCAN MACLAIN MURDER MYSTERY

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THE LAST EXPRESS

By BAYNARD KENDRICK

Author of "The Iron Spiders,"

"The Whistling Hangman,"

"Odor of Violets," etc.

Author's dedication—

TO THE BRAT

DELL PUBLISHING COMPANY

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THE LAST EXPRESS

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The Last Express

Chapter One: THE SEEING DETECTIVE

EVELYN ZARINKA nervously rolled her small handkerchief into a ball and wadded it tightly up against the soft moist palm of her hand. When she pushed the button of the automatic elevator, which would carry her from the 24th floor to the penthouse, her gesture was marked with a finality indicating despair.

In spite of the earnest assurance of Charles Hartshorn, her fiancé, that Captain Duncan Maclain was not only brilliant but kindly and sympathetic as well, she found herself dreading the interview. Only an ingrained dislike of appointment breakers had prevented her from turning back in the lobby of the apartment house downstairs.

For an instant, after the door slid silently closed in answer to her pressure on the button, she shut her eyes tightly, trying to imagine she was blind. She wondered what sort of a world it would be where all that you saw were dancing red points and strange tiny lines of shimmering yellow. Or did the blind have that much to comfort them? Perhaps. with that vital thing called "sight" once gone, even the dancing dots and lines disappeared—leaving a world without form and void, painted with the blackness of infinity.

On the drive into town from Long Island, through the enervating mugginess of the July evening, she had been unable to rid herself of the feeling that it was incredibly silly to ask a blind man for help. Yet help she must have from someone, for the past three months had

seen a startling change in her brother Paul. Their small house at Forest Hills, for her at least, had become a place of terror. Paul, laughing moodily at her anxious questions, had made things worse instead of better. She had reached a point where she eagerly accepted Chick's suggestion that she consult his blind friend.

The slow-moving elevator stopped with a click. The door slid silently open. She stepped out into a small reception room, delightfully cool and quiet, for Duncan Maclain's penthouse was air-conditioned throughout, doubly soundproofed against the roar of the traffic at 72d Street and Riverside Drive, 26 stories below.

An attractive girl, older than Evelyn, came from a door to the right and said in a pleasant voice, "I'm Rena Savage, Captain Maclain's secretary. You can go right on in, Miss Zarinka. He's expecting you."

She opened a door straight ahead, and Evelyn stepped through into the presence of the man whom the newspapers had made famous.

He rose as she entered and came around from behind the large mahogany desk, advancing toward her smiling and with outstretched hand. She had entered the room filled with unconscious pity. At the sight of the erect, handsome man in full evening dress crossing the room to greet her with utter self-assurance she was seized with consternation.

It was so contrary to what she expected that she exclaimed almost in a whisper,

"My Lord, he's attractive!"

Not until he stopped in the center of the room, waiting, did she remember he was blind and could not see where she was standing.

She advanced and took his hand. For a second both

of his strong ones enclosed hers in a cordial clasp. Then she suddenly reddened in embarrassment as he laughed and said, "I'll bet you're attractive, too! But I'm glad you like my dinner togs. I'm due to make a speech in a couple of hours—so I thought I'd let you get the benefit of them so long as I had to put them on. Sit down, won't you?"

He took a few steps beside her, holding her arm, then left her and walked confidently around the end of the desk to resume his place in the swivel chair.

"I didn't intend to be rude," Evelyn apologized. "In fact, I didn't know that I'd spoken aloud."

"Rude?" Maclain laughed again, and Evelyn thought quickly she had never seen a face so expressive. Pleasure showed in the quick lift of the corners of his mouth, the flash of his even teeth, and the delighted wriggle of eyebrows. The use of facial muscles, seldom apparent in the normal person, compensated for the blankness of his eyes. His strong face was mobile and alive, fascinating to watch as it portrayed and enhanced his speech. "I'm as flattered as a schoolgirl over your remark. And I'm the one who's rude. You spoke hardly above a whisper—but I've trained my ears to hear whispers—and even more. They have to do double duty, you know—like my hands and nose. Schnucke does the rest!"

At the sound of her name, Schnucke, a German shepherd, stood up at the left of Maclain's chair. She had been lying so quietly that Evelyn had failed to notice her. Her large low-placed ears erect, her broad jaws slightly open to display white strong teeth, she regarded Evelyn with interest and gave a friendly wag of her tail. Her almond-shaped eyes were slightly

lighter than her well-kept coat, and her gaze, while kindly, was firm and independent.

"So that's Schnucke!" Evelyn exclaimed. "I've read a lot about her in the papers, too."

"She's a stuck-up prig." Maclain laid a hand affectionately on Schnucke's head. "Lie down! You're always trying to get in the spotlight!"

Schnucke settled herself on the floor again. Maclain hitched his chair closer to the desk, removed a gold cigarette case from his vest pocket, and tendered it to his visitor.

She accepted and lighted the cigarette herself, wondering for an awkward moment whether or not she should offer him a light.

There was no necessity to do so. With no sign of hesitation he took a package of matches from his pocket, struck one, and with a swift skillful gesture, almost indiscernible, guided it to the tip of the cigarette in his mouth by running his fingers along the tube of paper. He applied the flame and inhaled deeply.

His surety and self-confidence were slowly putting Evelyn at her ease. Like so many people who entered Maclain's study for the first time, she was beginning to realize that Duncan Maclain, through inflexible will and perseverance, had turned blindness to his own ends.

The paneled room, comfortably and tastefully furnished, was indirectly lighted. Along the wall beside her were bookshelves, containing an orderly array of Braille books. She picked up one, looked curiously at the raised marks of the Braille, and laid it back on the shelf, then started guiltily as Maclain said. "That's a very motley collection, isn't it? But my profession de-

mands that I keep my reading diversified." He pointed across the room to a big Capehart in the corner. "I have some interesting Talking Books there. They're issued by the Library of Congress in records. I just finished listening to Gina Kaus's *Catherine; the Portrait of an Empress*—and Woollcott's book, *While Rome Burns*. I'm afraid I prefer Woollcott to Kaus. You must pardon me. I'm taking up your time with trivial talk—and you're in trouble."

"I'd hardly call it trivial," she said with a smile. "It's fascinating—and rather startling. How did you know I was looking at that book?"

"I heard you put it down. I hoped you'd ask. It makes things easier for me. You see, before I can get anyone's confidence I have to assure them of the fact that I'm not really blind."

"Not blind?"

"No." Maclain exhaled slowly. She watched the smoke curl upward around his crisp curly hair. "I just can't use my eyes. I lost them in the war. But after nearly twenty years it's a normal condition to me. I know now that I didn't know how to use them when I had them. The average person doesn't. During the past twenty years I've learned to use my other senses—hearing, feeling, taste and smell. With Schnucke to guide me—both of us were trained at the Seeing Eye—and the ability to get information from those who *can* see, I'm more than compensated."

"You mean you're perfectly happy?" she asked, astonished at his cheerful tone.

"Perfectly. More. I've reversed the old adage about the land of the blind where the one-eyed man was king. I've become king in a land of two-eyed detectives,

none of whom know how to see as well as I do. By the touch of the skin on your hand, and the sound of your voice, I know you're quite young. You're engaged to be married—I felt the solitaire when I took two steps beside you. It's quite a good one, too, about three-quarters of a carat, unless I'm mistaken. Your stride indicates that you're about five foot six. You see, I know how many steps you took from the door to where you're sitting. While I was shaking hands my fingers told me that you were so nervous coming here to see me that you wadded your handkerchief into a ball and were still clutching it in your hand. Now all of those things I've learned through touch and hearing.

"I've added to that from smell that you're a very meticulous young lady, addicted to plenty of soap and water and regular visits to the beauty shop."

"You make me feel like a goldfish."

"But a very pretty one. You see, I know further that you have brown hair, carefully waved, brown eyes, slightly snub nose, full red lips, extremely white and even teeth, a good chin, a slim but rounded figure, shapely legs and slender ankles. You're wearing a white silk blouse with a dark-blue tie and a monogram on the left breast; a blue leather belt; a white flannel skirt; light silk stockings and black and white sport shoes. Your blue hat is of the new airplane design—with a wing on the left side. It must add a very fitting touch to your ensemble."

Evelyn rose slowly to her feet and said coldly, "I'm sorry, Captain Maclain. This joke about your blindness has gone a little too far, hasn't it?"

"Please sit down," he said pleadingly. "I was merely

trying to illustrate my point. I assure you I'm quite blind—hopelessly so. But no one ever gets up to this penthouse without being seen. When you changed elevators at the twenty-fourth floor your description was phoned upstairs to me immediately. Mrs. Savage, whom you met in the hall, was two flights down, watching you through a slot in the door directly opposite the elevator. She ran up the stairs and greeted you in the hall when you got off. Will you trust me now—and let me see if I can't help?"

She resumed her seat and said thoughtfully after a moment,

"Yes, Captain Maclain, I think I will!"

Outside the mugginess had turned to a drizzle, covering the streets with a fine film of oily black. In a coupé, parked across from the apartment house on 72d Street, a cherubic-faced youth of 19 tossed his cigarette out of the window and started the motor. The clock on the dash showed it was nearly nine.

He turned the car north on Riverside Drive and back to Broadway on 74th Street. In a United Cigar Store he sought a telephone booth and dialed a number.

"The dame's been in 315 West 72d for half an hour!" His upper lip touched the top of the mouthpiece when he talked.

"Oh, yes, Miss Curtis," a suave voice replied. "I'm glad you reminded me of that."

"And popcorn to you, Madame Butterfly! Maybe you can't talk but you better act. That blind dick Maclain lives in that building. You're getting the twin sawbucks. I'll be seeing you up the river."

"I'm sorry I can't meet you there," said the voice contritely. "But I'll attend to the matter without delay!"

Chapter Two: THE DANGEROUS MAN

"I'M NOT REALLY worried about myself," Evelyn told Maclain. "It's my brother Paul. He's an assistant district attorney in the Homicide Division."

"Th: eats?"

"Not exactly. During the past few months he's changed in some way. I'm more than sensitive to his moods. He's twelve years older and has rather taken the place of my father, who died ten years ago."

"Can you state accurately when you first noticed this change?" Maclain opened a desk drawer at his right and took out a small pasteboard box. He dumped the contents on the desk before him. Evelyn gazed unbelievably at fifty or more pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Swiftly and unerringly his highly tactile fingers were turning the pieces face up.

He sensed that her pause was caused by his occupation and explained, "This is one of my bad habits—or good habits, according to the point of view. Believe me, I'm listening most intently—but it's necessary that I keep my fingers in training. The jigsaw puzzles help. I've become quite proficient after many years. They're really quite simple to fingers that must read Braille and follow the intricacies of raised maps. I was asking you about the date of this change in your brother."

"Oh, yes," she continued, unable to take her eyes from the deft selection and rejection, which had already coupled four pieces together. "It concerns so

many small things that I can't say just when it started. Probably the first was a series of phone calls from someone who refused to leave their name."

"The same person?"

"I don't know. I answered several times when Paul was out. The calls came in the evening. Twice it was a woman. Several times a man. Then our maid, Ida, a colored girl, answered once or twice but couldn't get any name."

"Is your brother interested in women?" Maclain held a piece poised over the desk.

After a brief wait she nodded, then flushed as she remembered the futility of nodding to Duncan Maclain. "Spasmodically," she said. "He's just past thirty and very good-looking. He's never been engaged—but he's had plenty of prospects. We make it a rule not to interfere with each other."

"Then you don't attribute his worry to women?"

"Decidedly not. Two months ago a call came for him at two in the morning. We have a small house on Greenway South in Forest Hills, although Paul maintains an apartment of his own in the city. I heard him answer the phone and shortly after he went out. He stayed out until six. I'm afraid he was in a fight. His face was badly bruised, and the knuckles of one hand were swollen."

"You asked where he'd been?"

"Up to then I've never had to ask him anything." Maclain was keenly aware of the dejection in her answer. The dejection blended into fear: "Since then I've hardly dared."

"When did he threaten you?"

Her breath quickened as she watched Maclain trace

a complicated curve with his forefinger and fit another piece into place. She had not intended to mention Paul's threats. An uneasy moment passed while she felt that Maclain's fluid fingers were not working a puzzle but were probing the intricacies of her mind laid on the desk before him. She had a flash of disquieting clearness, which showed her how useless it was to practice subterfuge in the presence of a man who saw with his senses instead of his eyes.

"Less than a week ago." She was agonizedly twisting the handkerchief again. "He bought a pistol, and I demanded flatly to know what it was for. He told me to mind my own business—or I'd get myself into trouble. I guess I flared up. I said he had become impossible to live with—and he intimated he could move in town permanently."

"He'd been drinking?"

"Yes," she admitted, surprised again into revealing something she had intended to conceal.

"That's been worrying you, too. I judge it's unusual."

"It is unusual. I've kept house for him since I was a little girl." The words came tumbling out. She was close to tears. "He's educated me—been kind to me—taken the place of my parents. We've been friends more than brother and sister. He's involved in something terrible, Captain Maclain, something sinister. Two nights ago he was away all night—and our house was searched. Everything torn to pieces but nothing taken. He refused to call in the police—cursed me when I made the suggestion. And now I'm being followed. I'm certain of it."

"Money?" Maclain fitted the last piece of the puzzle into place, mussed the picture up with a few quick

motions, and returned the pieces to the box.

"We've always had plenty. My father was wealthy. We have sufficient income to live on without Paul's salary. I can pay you without any trouble—any reasonable fee if you'll help me!"

"Unfortunately all investigations cost money." He rubbed the tip of his nose and leaned back in the chair. "I didn't have that in mind. Does your brother handle your father's estate?"

"He was made sole executor."

"Of how much?"

"Nearly \$300,000. But—" She stopped abruptly, lacing her fingers together, pressing the handkerchief between her palms.

Maclain took another cigarette from his case and lighted it. "There's been no change in your income?"

"That's impossible. Captain Maclain!" She was annoyed, a trifle overinsistent. He had touched a latent worry which for weeks she had not admitted to herself. She considered the very thought libelous to her brother. The Zarinkas were a family strong in tradition, comfortable in circumstance. Her background had been that money was naturally available and therefore unmentionable. Yet, since her father died, she had not failed to notice that Paul was obsessed with an urge for greater riches, additional power.

Duncan Maclain's silence was worse than questioning. He sat behind his desk reflecting calm expectancy, wordlessly dissecting intimate irritations which decency demanded be either forgotten or concealed. Evelyn found she could neither conceal nor forget them. Gadflies of memory returned in a swarm to prod her—Paul's cynical remarks: "Money's the key to this

city!"—"I believe in charity. It's a good graft!"

Such statements had been repeated too often to be casual. She was concerned about Paul's safety—most concerned. But she was also conscious of the good name her family had long possessed. Duncan Maclain must never know that for four black months her income had stopped entirely. Added to drinking and threats it painted a picture unfair to her brother and herself. She might believe Paul headstrong and unwise. Even to insure his safety she would not brand him a blackguard. Her income had started again, without explanation. The temporary cessation was best put out of mind.

"I presume you receive regular reports as to the status of your father's estate?" Maclain asked the question twice before she answered, and his eyebrows showed he was puzzled.

"Semiannually." Mechanically she forced her voice to firmness. "I'm still young, Captain Maclain, but I do have some slight idea about business procedure. The report is from a reputable firm of certified public accountants. You're wrong if you think any manipulation has brought about this present situation."

"Very well," he said amiably. He was certain of her fears about the estate but respected her desire to protect her brother. Adroitly he took another line. "Your assurance leaves me two avenues of investigation—blackmail or intimidation."

"Blackmail?" she repeated unsteadily. "With Paul? Impossible."

"Unfortunately it's quite possible. His wealth and his public office leave him doubly open. It's a profession dependent on pride and money for existence.

Your brother has both—and knows many women. However, it's not as dangerous as the intimidation. There are men in New York ready to use any means to save themselves from the law. Do you know of any recent cases on which your brother was working?"

"He never spoke of his work to me. I'm afraid I can't help you there."

"I can find out. Do you know any of his women friends?"

"A few." Maclain judged she was embarrassed at the question, but she went bravely on. "Shall I say those on the more respectable side? He has an address book at home. Perhaps—"

"That's for you to decide, of course. A list of the names in that book would be of invaluable help, presuming you wish me to continue."

"I do," she assured him. "My talk with you has already made me feel better. Is \$200 sufficient as a retainer?"

"Ample." He rose, smiling. Schnucke stood up beside him and stretched herself, yawning pinkly. "You can mail me a check with the list of names."

"I'd prefer to give you the money now. I brought it with me." She opened her bag, counted ten 20's onto the desk, then picked them up and placed them in his hand.

"Thank you." He gave a slight bow as he folded the bills and put them in his pocket. "I hope I can be of real service."

"There's one more thing," she remarked hesitantly. "It's silly, but I feel I should tell you. We have some friends, Howard Hewitt and his wife Gladys. They

come to our house quite often to play bridge. She's much younger than Howard—and extremely beautiful. I've felt for some time that Paul was showing her too much attention. . . .”

She paused uncertainly, and he asked, “You've heard something to confirm that idea?”

“Several things—and Howard Hewitt is a man of violent temper. He's with the Department of Gas, Water and Electricity. I know a girl who works there. She's seen Paul and Gladys together more than once—at the Hi-de-Ho Club in the Village.”

Duncan Maclain stiffened and placed both hands palm down on the top of the desk. “Did you ever hear your brother mention the name ‘Hoe fle,’ Miss Zarinka?”

“Why, yes. Since you've reminded me, I believe that was a case he worked on some time ago. But I don't know anything about it.”

“I don't want to alarm you without cause.” His hands pressed tighter on the desk. “But it's better you know the truth. If your brother's mixed up with Benny Hoe fle he's in danger—frightful danger, Miss Zarinka.”

Her full lips trembled. “What makes you think he's mixed up with this man?”

“Anyone who knows Hoe fle by sight is mixed up with him,” said Duncan Maclain.

Chapter Three: LAST GRIM RECORDING

THE TOMBS PRISON, squatting next to the Criminal Courts building, showed half-a-dozen dim rectangles of yellow light. The Criminal Courts building was dark, a hideous, distorted mass of bricks, futilely trying

to rid itself of grime in the soft fall of the drizzling rain.

Slightly farther north, on the same side of Centre Street, a dim hanging light swung gently in a breeze from the East River. It flickered on the gold lettering of a plate-glass window in the building on the corner, making the words *District Attorney's Office* move deceptively. Two floors above, three lighted windows indicated late workers.

Patrolman Galligan, taking a short refuge from the rain in an all-night lunch across the street, looked up at the windows and stirred more sugar into his coffee. "Them D. A.'s give me a pain," he confided to the man back of the counter. "We make the pinches, and they work all night to turn 'em loose."

"Yeah." The counterman wiped his hands on a dirty towel and squinted through window and drizzle. "Homicide Bureau working, ain't it? Dey got a boid wot cu'd double for John Barrymore. 'Jever see 'im? Begins wid a Z---his name I mean. He give me a dime tip once---fer a doughnut and coffee."

"Zarinka." Galligan blew in his spoon. "He's trying to pin the Delancey killing on Benny Hoefle."

"So's me old Aunt Hattie." The counterman twisted in a new station on the radio and turned it up to blaring pitch. "Last night I forgot and missed me program," he yelled. "I'm getting the right station early tonight."

Patrolman Galligan tossed a nickel on the counter. "And I'm getting t'hell out. I've got a couple of kids I can listen to when I crave a row like that."

He started slowly up Centre Street, pausing to try the doors of darkened machinery supply shops which

lined the way. A short distance below Walker Street a solitary sedan was parked. As Galligan watched idly, a man crossed Centre Street and got in the car. The set of his shoulders, hunched against the rain, and the free swing of his arms were vaguely familiar, but Galligan could not see his face.

After a few moments, when the car did not start, the patrolman sauntered on by. The occupant of the car was in the front seat, half sideways, his back toward the sidewalk. He was engrossed in a paper held open under the dash light. Galligan hesitated, on the verge of speaking, but the windows of the sedan were closed, and there was nothing suspicious about the man's conduct. Furthermore, the car was familiar. He had seen it parked on his beat many times, and the license number was low—9Y-97.

Galligan was no rookie. He knew that patrolmen who started a career of questioning every occupant of a parked car would find most of the occupants were indignant taxpayers entitled to protection instead of interference. Such a career of derring-do invariably ended on the carpet before a deputy commissioner. He shrugged massive shoulders under his slicker and walked on toward Canal Street, trying more doors.

Upstairs in the district attorney's office Miss Amelia Burberry covered her typewriter and clanged the doors of an ancient safe, dismissing it for the night with a twirl of the knob. She was past 40 and looked older, for her hair was gray and her face hard from the weathering of many political blizzards. She stopped in the outer room, a large expanse of linoleum-covered floor furnished with four oak desks, separated from the corridor by a brass railing.

"You going to work all night?"

Paul Zarinka looked up from a blue-backed brief and pushed an impeding pile of lawbooks to one side. Miss Burberry, who had seen many faces in varying degrees of trouble and grief, thought for a moment he was startled at her question. She dismissed the idea. Much work in the Homicide Bureau of the D. A.'s office tended to breed peculiar expressions, easily subject to misinterpretation.

"I'm checking out shortly," he said. "Good night." His smoldering brown eyes returned to the brief.

Miss Burberry was inclined to linger. She lived in Long Island City, and occasionally Paul Zarinka drove her home on his way to Forest Hills. "You've been putting in a lot of overtime."

"I'll put in a lot more before I get where I'm going."

"It doesn't pay."

"Nothing pays—unless you make it. Good night." His clipped words stultified any further conversation.

The creeping elevator which served the building had ceased many hours before. He listened as Miss Burberry's adequate feet traversed the length of the corridor and started down the worn stairs. When the sound of them died away he left his desk and went to a window overlooking Centre Street. For five minutes he looked down at the supply shops over the way, chewing on his thumb with quick nervous bites.

An umbrella-shielded pedestrian, recognizable as Miss Burberry, hurried toward the nearest subway station. Paul Zarinka straightened up and turned slowly around. In the darkened surface of the windowpane he had seen a raincoated form come through the gate in the brass railing behind him. It was a sweet-faced

boy who looked to be in his early teens, except for his eyes. They approached perfect roundness so closely as to be bizarre and were partly covered with a film. Due to their abnormal construction his face constantly reflected an earnest surprise—a startling surprise, the amazement of a dying fish at finding itself removed from the water.

Paul Zarinka sat down without speaking, wiping his mouth with a handkerchief to cover an involuntary twitching of one corner. The boy perched himself on a desk edge in the shadow, crossed well-shod small feet, and lighted a cigarette by flicking a match with his thumbnail. He inhaled deeply, showed exquisite teeth without grinning, and let the smoke trickle out from between them.

“The great mouthpiece,” he said, still holding his teeth together. “How are you, toots?”

“What do you want, Madonna?” Zarinka’s forehead glistened in the light of the desk lamp. “It’s crazy to come up here.”

“A nuthouse, hunh? I heard something was missing from the files and that nobody could find you this afternoon. I thought I’d drop around and see if you’d heard about it.”

The blood rushed to Paul Zarinka’s dark face and drained away. He smoothed his black mustache with one finger wrapped in the handkerchief. “Maybe you haven’t heard that the governor has started an investigation. Do you think I’m a fool?”

“I’m trying to find out, toots. We’re afraid the great mouthpiece may have lost our little nest egg. Three hundred grand!”

“Well, you’d better go back where you came from,

Madonna. I'm not putting out. You may be afraid—and your boss may be afraid—but he's not my boss, and I don't scare easy. Don't forget that half that nest egg is mine—and I'm the only one who knows where it is. It's staying there until things quiet down."

The boy stood up, took a small mirror from his pocket, and sleeked back his glossy blond hair with a pocket comb. "Ooh! Such a nasty tough mans!" He cocked his head to one side, registering a mixture of surprise and sadness.

"Get out of here!" Zarinka ordered furiously. "Or I'll knock your sissified head off!"

"Go ahead." Madonna's eyes grew even more round and fishy. "The sign outside says 'Homicide Bureau.' I'd just as soon fog you here as any place." He vaulted the brass railing and went down the corridor, singing "I'll be glad when you're dead, you rascal, you!"

Paul walked to the railing and watched him out of sight down the stairs. Then he gathered the papers from his desk, shoved them into a folder, and placed it in the steel files, locking the drawer behind him. From a clothes tree in the corner he took his belted raincoat, slipped into it, and felt for the weight of the Smith and Wesson in the pocket.

Felt hat in hand, he switched off the desk light, then turned it on again, and dialed a number on the phone. "Tell the lady at table number four her escort will be there in twenty minutes," he ordered the foreign voice at the other end.

He went down the stairs holding the cocked Smith and Wesson in his right hand, and breathed more freely when he reached the street. With one hand on the door handle of his car he drew a sharp whistling

breath at sight of the man inside, walked around to the other side by the wheel, and climbed in.

"I forgot you had a key to the car," he said as he pressed the starter.

"That's rather careless, isn't it?"

"There are more important things than that. Madonna wanted to know where I was this afternoon. He just left the office. It was careless of me not to shoot him. You didn't see him by any chance?"

"I wouldn't know him if I did."

"That's funny." Paul stopped for a traffic light. "I had an idea you knew him. Was there something on your mind?"

"Nothing much. I saw your car and thought you might drive me home. There's a new investigation due from Albany."

The light changed to green, but Paul kept the car out of gear. "I'm sorry, I have a date in the Village. I can drop you any place on the way."

"Never mind. Canal Street will do. I can take the B. M. T. there. I'll take a run over to Brooklyn instead. I turned down a poker game, but I might as well go. You say you've heard about the investigation?"

"Yes," Paul said shortly. "I've heard about it—and I'm not worried. I have no tin boxes to conceal." He started the car and was silent for the short distance to Canal Street. "Good night," he said, as his companion alighted. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"I hope so," the man declared, and started across Canal Street against the red light.

Centre Street was almost deserted, and the traffic on Canal Street was light. When the hand grenade burst

in Paul Zarinka's sedan he was the only one killed. You could hardly count the two white mice he was carrying in a cage in the back of his car.

With nine pieces of jagged metal in him, Paul lived long enough to speak. Patrolman Galligan reached him first and marked down his words in a notebook.

The copy made for Duncan Maclain was recorded on an Ediphone record: "*Sea Beach Subway—the last express!*"

Chapter Four: THE DEAD MICE

THE MACHINERY of the New York Police Department may be ponderous, but it moves with alacrity and deadly efficiency when once under way. It is extremely doubtful if the startled Patrolman Galligan remembered the proper police procedure when Paul Zarinka's automobile blew up within a few blocks of headquarters on his peaceful beat.

There was little necessity for him to live up to regulations and notify headquarters who in turn would notify the chief of police, the commander of the detective bureau, the medical examiner, the district attorney, the Homicide Squad specialists, the Technical Police Laboratory and the staff photographers and stenographers, and, since it was a homicide caused by explosion, the Bomb Squad, for within five minutes after the deafening detonation Centre and Canal streets were swarming with efficient men.

Sergeant Aloysius Archer of the Homicide Squad found the two dead white mice in their tiny battered wire birdcage not 15 feet from where the car had waited for the light. They were resting in the doorway

of a store with a shattered window, deposited there intact by some strange freak of the explosion.

He picked them up, regarded them curiously for a moment, and pushed his way roughly through the milling crowd to a place where he could get a better look under the street light at the corner. He found Inspector Larry Davis in a circle of uniformed men holding back the crowd. The inspector was bent over, interestedly watching a man sketch the design of a set of tire tracks still visible on the wet street.

The man wrote down the figures "B three-thirds" under the design and said, "A car must have passed him all right, Inspector, but I'm afraid it won't do us much good. These are Michelin taxi tires all the way around."

"We can check, anyhow," Inspector Davis said curtly and turned to Sergeant Archer. "What have you got there?"

"Mice."

The sergeant held out the cage. The inspector's thick eyebrows met. "Where were they?"

The sergeant pointed. "In that doorway over there."

"What is it, a pet shop?" the inspector asked.

Archer grinned. "A machinery supply store. I think these were blown there. What knocked him off—dynamite?"

The inspector shook his head and held out a big hand. In his palm lay an octagonal piece of metal.

"Something new. A Mills hand grenade."

The sergeant was about to speak but stopped. The crowd had parted to admit a Cadillac coupé. It pulled up to the curb, and a patrolman sprang to open the door.

"The D. A.," Davis muttered under his breath. "Will he be burned up!"

District Attorney Claude Dearborn was a man with powerful friends, and equally powerful enemies, a fact which he never allowed himself to forget. Even in the press of official business he was seldom deserted by his sense of caution.

Springer, the blunt, bullet-faced man at the wheel of the Cadillac, was his constant companion. The sight of Springer's heavy blue-serged figure occupying a chair discreetly outside of ballrooms and dining-rooms was a sure sign of District Attorney Dearborn's presence in person at the functions under way. Springer could sit hours on end without an apparent movement, declining hostesses' proffers of refreshments with a wordless shake of his head, his face as expressionless as the butt end of a cartridge, watching each passer-by with lackadaisical eyes which missed nothing.

A slightly exaggerated rumor had it that he knew every man and woman with a police record in the United States and that he could hit a quarter tossed in the air with the snub-barreled .38 which slanted his coat slightly to the side as he walked.

In curious contrast was the immaculate, gray-coated form of the D.A. as he stepped from the coupé, hitched his expensive hat forward to shield his eyes from the rain, and encompassed the assembled crowd of police and onlookers with normally pleasant gray eyes suddenly gone hard.

Springer got out from under the wheel and wordlessly stood beside him. Together they moved forward toward Inspector Davis and the mangled remains of Paul Zarinka's car. The D. A. stood for a moment look-

ing down at the wreckage, then took a white handkerchief from his pocket and made an attempt to clear his platinum-rimmed spectacles of water which obscured his view. There were T-shaped lines at the ends of his mouth when he said, "This is getting pretty close to home. I suppose they'll bomb headquarters next. Are you sure it's Zarinka?"

"I'm sure it's what is left of him. You can take a look if you want to." The inspector was unimpressed by Claude Dearborn's biting tones. "You'll find the *res gesta* over there." He nodded toward a rubberblanketed heap near the curb.

The D. A. suppressed a short answer and walked away, not quite certain whether or not the inspector was kidding him by his use of the legal phrase *res gesta*. Inspector Davis watched him lift the end of the rubber blanket and quickly lower it again.

Dearborn crossed the street back to the Cadillac coupé and got in, beckoning the inspector to him through the window. The inspector assigned Sergeant Archer to join him, fearing a tirade which he did not care to face alone. But the D. A. was calm, almost ominously so.

Three veterans of the press from headquarters were already bearing down on him through the cordon of police. The situation was more than trying and gave every evidence of getting progressively worse.

"What have you found?" Dearborn asked curtly, with an eye on the approaching reporters.

"Quite a lot for twenty minutes." The inspector reached under his slicker for a toothpick and worked on a front tooth. "The officer on the beat here saw a man waiting in Zarinka's car."

"Who?"

"Ask me another."

"Where was the car?"

"It was parked just below Walker Street."

"How long ago?"

"Forty-five minutes." The inspector threw his toothpick away and turned to Sergeant Archer. "You can attend to the gentlemen of the press, Sergeant. Tell 'em what you know—anything—but keep 'em from crawling all over the car here until the D. A. can get away."

The sergeant walked off to greet the reporters, and Davis continued, "From what I can tell now, he was killed with a Mills hand grenade thrown into the back of his car out of a passing taxi."

"How did you get that?"

"The Bomb Squad found pieces of the grenade, and there were marks of Michelin taxi tires visible close by where his car was stopped."

"How do you know his car was stopped?"

"You'll have to ask Dilks of the Auto Squad. He told me so. That's his business."

Claude Dearborn looked past the inspector at the wreckage on the street. "What happened to the other man in the car?"

"He got out."

"How do you know?"

"Because he wasn't blown out." The inspector leaned an elbow wearily against the open window of the coupé and rested himself. Obvious questions always made him a trifle sick to his stomach. "We found some mice in a doorway."

"What, for God's sake, has that to do with the ex-

plosion?"

"I wish I knew. Lieutenant Kilpatrick of the Bomb Squad says they were blown there. They were in a wire cage."

"I never heard such tommyrot," the D. A. said disgustedly. "Some kid probably left them in the doorway, and they were killed by the explosion."

"I don't think any kid would leave his pets in a doorway overnight, do you?"

"How do you know they were pets?"

"Well, most white mice in a cage are pets." The inspector straightened up and shook himself free of water. "And these were white and in a cage and dead, and Kilpatrick says they'd been blown through the air. I'm inclined to take his word for it."

"Well, I'm not," said Dearborn. "That's the trouble with the department today. It's gotten so scientific, it goes haywire over its experts and lets the criminals get away."

The inspector choked back a smoky remark which had to do with lawyers and legal technicalities. A man was hurrying toward them carrying something in his hand. He stopped beside the inspector and held out a square of brown cloth.

"What's that?" Dearborn asked.

"A piece of carpet from the back of the car."

"All cars have carpet in them."

"Yes, sir." The man held the carpet in through the window. "That's quite true, Mr. Dearborn, but I wanted the inspector to see these spots."

"They're probably blood." The D. A. switched on the lights in the top of the coupé and looked closer. Springer, from his place behind the wheel, turned his

big head long enough to glance without interest at the brown fabric. The inspector leaned back against the side of the coupé and gazed at the buildings across the street, then turned quickly and produced another toothpick from his pocket. He leaned through the window beside the man and pried with the end of the toothpick at one of the flattened brownish spots enmeshed in the fabric. It came loose and he flicked it into his broad palm.

"I guess we'll have to depend on one of our no-account laboratories again," he said, "but I'll tell you what this is, Mr. Dea: born, and before the carpet gets up there. This is a dropping—a dropping from one of the pets in that wire cage. Those two mice were in Paul Zarinka's car!"

Chapter Five: PERHAPS FOR A WARNING

A VAST submerged city exists below the swarming streets of New York. In its cavernous depths thousands of busy workers toil all day and all night, following as many and as varied pursuits as are found aboveground. They live a life artificial as a paper flower, hardly ever conscious of the weather outside.

Their world has a million suns, glowing electric bulbs never dark, the weird green rays of mercury-vapor tubes. Dotted miles of emerald and red planets form their stars, safely checking the headlong rush of speeding trains. Massive pumps work endlessly to keep the inhabitants of this strange underground city alive, cleansing and purifying the air they breathe, keeping their domain free of encroaching water from hidden streams, which sometimes run far above their heads.

The apartment house occupied by Captain Duncan Maclain towered 26 stories above 72d Street, but that was not the extent of its height. Actually it had 30 floors, four of which were underground. In its subbasements were boilers, a refrigeration plant, an immaculate kitchen, supplying viands to the restaurant, and ample storage space to house the surplus baggage of the tenants.

Each of the subbasements was larger in area than the stories above, for New York buildings, unlike those of most cities, have a peculiar privilege. Their area underground extends to the edge of the sidewalk, and under the sidewalks are vaults.

On the morning after Paul Zarinka was killed, Duncan Maclain, clothed in slacks and a white silk sports shirt, revealing strong tanned arms, was engaged in a curious occupation in the subbasement four stories below the level of the street. A 40-foot square had been built in one corner of the basement by the simple expedient of piling flour sacks, filled with sand, one on top of the other to form a surrounding wall nine feet high. The floor in the center of the square was of soft white sand, levelly piled about a foot deep.

Duncan Maclain was standing in the center of the square, poised lightly on the balls of his feet like a boxer ready for the fray, his mobile face alert and eager. Hanging under his left arm was a soft leather armpit holster, holding with a spring clip a flat .32 automatic in such fashion that it could be freed from the holster by a single jerk.

"Ready?" asked a voice from outside of the nine-foot wall.

"Ready," Maclain replied.

An empty tin coffee can was tossed over the wall to the inside of the square. It landed with a soft thud at Maclain's back and slightly to his left. For the barest fraction of a second he stood listening; then as the can ceased to roll, he jerked the gun from the holster with a gesture smooth as oil, made a quarter turn to the left, and fired.

The steel-jacketed bullet plowed up sand within eight inches of the can. The head of Samuel Savage, known to Duncan Maclain and his friends as Spud, appeared over the top of the sandbags from the outside.

"Eight inches to the right, Dunc," he said, a glint of admiration showing in his peculiar yellow eyes. "Not bad for blind shooting. Try it again."

He climbed down from the small stepladder which supported him and took another coffee can from a basketful beside him. Stepping gingerly on tiptoe, he made his way around to the other side of the square. It was a precaution taken in deference to Duncan Maclain. Spud's feet were rubber-soled and apparently made no noise on the cement floor. But Spud Savage had worked too long with Maclain not to know that the captain far exceeded normality in ability to hear. The second time, Spud threw the can over the sandbag wall without prewarning. Maclain fired. Spud ran to the other end of the square and tossed in another. Almost as it landed Maclain shot again, and the metallic clink of a bullet on tin showed he had a hit.

"Hold it." Spud said, "there's someone coming."

The rattle of an elevator door sounded at the other end of the basement. Footsteps started across the floor toward Maclain's sand pit, where years of practice, two days a week, had developed his skill in shooting

at sound to a phenomenal degree.

He slipped the gun back into its holster and stood listening. The apartment house had strict orders that he was never to be interviewed anywhere but in his penthouse, unless it was a matter of extreme urgency. He recognized the sound of small well-shod feet accompanied by a pair of heavier brogans, then he heard Spud say, "Hello, Claude. What's in the wind?"

Spud's words were followed by a soft, half-friendly, half-warning growl from Schnucke, who had been lying quietly outside, undisturbed by the shooting, waiting for her master.

Maclain walked to a corner of the pit where niches in the sandbags provided a foothold, agilely climbed to the top of the wall, and sat down. Springer, without taking his eyes off Schnucke, wonderingly noted Maclain's costume and the gun strapped under his left arm, but made no comment.

The D. A. greeted Spud and watched him place the small stepladder and assist Maclain to the floor. He shook hands with the captain but stepped quickly, almost precipitately, back as Schnucke came up and stood at her master's left side, the top of the leather-covered U-shaped brace harnessed to her back close to Maclain's hand.

"And how are you, Springer?" Maclain extended his hand toward the D. A.'s bodyguard, surprising that impenetrable man into a quick clasp and an articulate "Howdy."

"Suppose we go upstairs," Maclain suggested. "It's more comfortable there."

Springer watched admiringly as Maclain seized the brace on Schnucke's back with his left hand and with-

out hesitation followed her guidance to the elevator door, where he found the button and pressed it.

Hot rain, spattering on the terrace, showed through the windows of the penthouse office, but the air-conditioned room was cool. As the four men came into the room, Rena Savage greeted the visitors and held a soft blue blazer for Maclain. He slipped it on, then unhesitatingly crossed the room and took his place behind the desk.

Rena Savage disposed of wet raincoats for Dearborn and Springer, then went into an adjoining room and closed the door behind her.

The room she entered was half the size of the adjacent office. Arranged about the walls in orderly array were hundreds of Ediphone records, each one carefully indexed. They formed only a small part of the verbal records of Maclain's cases since he and Spud had gone into business together. Over 2,000 more such records were stored in a fireproof vault in the subbasement of the apartment house, where they were safe but easily available.

A double record was made of every conversation which took place in Maclain's office, although many of the people concerned were unaware of the fact. Concealed at points of vantage behind the paneling of the walls were four detecto-dictographs, highly sensitive and efficient. The touch of a button under Maclain's desk signaled Rena in the adjoining room. Through headphones she took every word in shorthand. In addition, an Ediphone record picked up and recorded directly each spoken word. The records were checked against Rena's notes when the interview was over, and a second wax cylinder was made, transcribed

verbatim from her shorthand book in her pleasant, distinct voice.

A complete transcript of Evelyn Zarinka's interview with Maclain the previous evening already formed part of the files.

Springer disposed of himself in a corner. Spud Savage stretched out on a comfortable divan. The district attorney pulled a chair close to the desk and accepted a cigarette from Maclain's tendered box. He was a man accustomed to legal battles and cross-examination, but he found himself at a disadvantage in talking to Duncan Maclain. He had overcome a monotonous tone of voice by a successful habit of gazing directly into people's eyes when he spoke and punctuating his telling points by quick changes of expression. Maclain's inability to respond invariably made him ill at ease.

"I learned this morning that you were mixed up in the Zarinka killing."

"You make it sound as if I were a suspect, Claude. I suppose you've talked to his sister."

"Not yet. One of Inspector Davis's men found she had consulted you last night."

"From her?"

The D. A. nodded. "Yes. I trotted right up here. I need help. Since you're already in this thing—"

"I'm in nothing," Maclain interrupted. "Evelyn Zarinka consulted me last night because she was worried about her brother's actions during the past few months. He's dead now, and that lets me out. I've already told Rena to return Miss Zarinka's retainer."

"You can tell me what she was worried about."

"So can she. That's straight police work."

"You can't drop out of this now, Maclain." Dearborn leaned across the desk to add force to his words, then straightened up again. He turned pleadingly to Spud Savage. "Give me a hand with him, Spud. You know what I'm up against on this case—a political mess is right down your alley—and this is a mess."

Spud swung his feet from the divan to the floor and looked first at the motionless Springer, then at the D. A. "Your compliments are backhanded this morning," he said with a slow grin, "but I'll take them with a sprig of parsley. Why don't you speak out and quit stalling, Claude? Dunc's blind, but he can still see you're suffering. Is the importunate press muttering in its beard about the fair name of your office—or is it bothered about the lack of an indictment in the killing of one Thomas Delancey on West 42d Street?"

"You hardly needed to bring that up, Spud," Maclain chided his friend in a mocking tone. He knew that Dearborn was flushing with anger, for the Delancey murder had been front-page news for months. It had finally reached the attention of the governor, via the report of a zealous grand jury. As a result, District Attorney Claude Dearborn was stewing in a pot of political broth, boiled to a fury.

"Hit me anywhere you like," said Dearborn. "My chin's grown a callus. I'll tell you why I need help. The police department is as friendly toward me as two leopards in a cage with a pork chop. I don't need to tell you about the Delancey affair. Everybody in New York who can read thinks that Hoefle bumped him. That includes me."

"The grand jury didn't think so," Maclain reminded.

The D. A. made a noise with his lips. "Grand juries *can't* think. One jury fails to indict Hoefle. The next one wants me kicked out of office because he wasn't indicted. Add the tabloids howling for my scalp, and stir in a dash of my best man, Zarinka, blasted on the front steps of police headquarters. The answer is why I'm here."

Duncan Maclain reached for the jigsaw puzzle in the drawer of his desk and dumped the pieces on the top.

"Am I being retained for something?"

"And if so—who pays?" Spud asked.

"I'm paying," said Dearborn. "I always do. You seem to get the general idea. The papers are nailing my hide to the mast—yelling their heads off for fireworks and action. I'm going to reopen the Delancey case—"

"And toss the press a veal cutlet," said Spud. "That's you, Dunc. Picturesque figure and all that sort of thing. Noted blind detective called in to assist D. A.'s investigators—columns about the Seeing Eye and the human qualities of Schnucke—all designed to quiet the panting reporters."

"I've been a veal cutlet before, Spud." Maclain's fingers were busy with the puzzle. "Outside of the smoke screen, Claude, what do you really want me to do?"

"Find out who got Zarinka—and why."

"Didn't he work on the Delancey case?"

"Certainly."

"Then you know who got him."

"I know who got Delancey, too. But I'm about to lose my job trying to prove it. This isn't as easy as it

looks, Maclain. I'm getting the razz from the Police Department."

"Who's on the case?" Spud asked.

"Inspector Davis and Archer of the Homicide Squad. Why?"

Spud shook his head.

"You're off on the wrong foot already, Claude. I've known that pair too long. They never razzed anybody in their official career. Together they have less humor than the late Cal Coolidge. What was their current bit of persiflage?"

The D. A. took a final quick puff from his cigarette, then blurted out, "Davis claims that Paul was carrying around two white mice in his car. Archer found a couple of dead ones in a birdcage near where the car was wrecked."

"Whew!" Spud's yellow eyes gleamed with joy. "What the papers will do to that one! 'D. A. Hires Man and Dog to Trail Mice!' I'd say that lets us out, Dunc. What about it?"

"Maybe they weren't kidding." Maclain's hands were still, a certain sign of his interest. "I think I'll help you, Claude. One hundred dollars a day—expenses—and a free hand. I'm interested in those mice."

"Good Lord, Maclain!" the D. A. exclaimed, startled. "You don't think those *could* have come from Paul's car. What in the name of heaven would Zarinka be doing with mice?"

"Some folks like them as pets." Maclain smiled broadly. "I don't think Zarinka falls in that class. Others use them for experimental purposes in the science of medicine. He hardly fits there, either. Maybe he had them along with him to warn him."

"What do they do?" the silent Springer asked. "Sing?"

"No," Maclain told him. "They wriggle and squeak whenever they get a whiff of poison gas."

Chapter Six: AN UNCANNY MEETING

CHARLES HARTSHORN was a personable young man in his late 20's. Softly padded against the knotty problems of life by a comfortable income, his even disposition concealed a real capability for many things. His affability and sweetness delighted many hostesses on Park Avenue and the East Side. He lived a life of consistent correctness, believed that the Republican Party was a panacea for all ills, and intuitively knew what system his partner used at bridge, and whether or not he should show up for dinner with a black or white tie.

His respect for the immutable laws of human conduct was so great that when Evelyn Zarinka confided her fears to him about her brother Paul he was inclined to make light of them. To him it was not unnatural that an assistant district attorney should receive late telephone calls and have certain embroilments with women representing the seamier side of the city.

Finally, although he did not voice it to Evelyn, some of her worry began to communicate itself to him. His own attempts to allay her fears proved fruitless. He was genuinely fond of her and saw that she was growing a trifle hysterical under the strain.

Duncan Maclain had a happy faculty of relieving people of uneasiness, so Chick sent Evelyn to consult him, knowing his blind friend could help her if any-

one could. When she tremulously phoned him the news of her brother's death he wished he had taken such action weeks before.

Evelyn was due at his apartment at 11:00. He spent a restless hour beating down the soft nap of the gray Chinese rug in his living-room. The longer he walked, the more difficult his problem became. He automatically removed a thin platinum watch from his fob pocket and discovered it was still 25 minutes to the hour.

Annoyed at himself, the beastly weather, and the slow passage of time, he poured a stiff drink of scotch from a cut-glass decanter, then decided against it. The day was stifling hot, and he compromised with a shower. He had just shut off the stinging spray of cold water when the buzzer announced someone at the door of his apartment. He knew it could not be Evelyn, for she invariably phoned her arrival from downstairs.

With a muttered word of annoyance he slipped into a large bathrobe of Turkish toweling and crossed the room to investigate, wondering if some keen reporter had already unearthed his connection with the Zarkins.

There were two men outside; one slim, straight and crinkly eyed, in a thin, rain-spotted, well-pressed suit of light gray; the other stouter, with an arrogant round face under a dripping hat. The thinner of the two smiled pleasantly and said, "Mr. Hartshorn?"

Chick admitted his identity but kept the door closed to an inquiring slit. The man in the gray suit held out his hand and disclosed a badge. "I'm sorry to trouble you," he said. "I'm Inspector Davis of the Homicide Squad, and this is Sergeant Archer."

The heavy man removed his wet hat in acknowledgement and put a large hand against the door. Chick stepped back into the hall and swung it open. He was annoyed but certain there was nothing he could do about it. Inevitably there would be questions. He had rather the brunt of them fell on him than on Evelyn. He beckoned the two men inside and closed the door behind them, watching the sergeant's eyes travel appraisingly over the rich furnishings of the apartment and come to rest on the silver-framed picture of Evelyn adorning the mantel.

Chick pointed to the decanter of scotch on the table and said, "If you'll excuse me a moment, I'll slip on some clothes."

There was a telephone in his bedroom. He intended to leave word at the desk downstairs for Evelyn not to call, but to come back an hour later. His knowledge of police procedure was very slight, but the mere presence of the two men in the living-room filled him with a strange trepidation, causing him to tiptoe around the bed toward the phone. As he lifted the phone from the cradle and waited for the voice of the apartment-house operator, he started guiltily.

In the mirror of the bureau he saw that the door to the bedroom had been opened. The man in the neat gray suit was leaning against the doorjamb watching him.

"Order please?" the operator asked.

"Two bottles of White Rock and some cracked ice," Chick said quickly and put the phone back in place.

The inspector grinned. "You must figure on doing a lot of drinking," he remarked.

"Oh!" Chick turned around. "Why?"

"Maybe the frigidaire I passed in your serving pantry is out of order. Skip it! Neither of us drink while we're on duty. Were you expecting somebody else? You seemed in an awful hurry to get to your bank this morning—and back home!"

Chick sat down on the edge of the bed and wiped his damp ankles on the hem of his bathrobe before he replied. "I was, as a matter of fact. My fiancée's coming in a few minutes."

"Miss Zarinka, isn't it?"

Chick nodded. "I hoped—"

"That's all right," said the inspector. "We're not going to bite her. It's you we want to talk to."

"What do you expect to get out of me?"

"I don't know. That's why we came up. When did you hear Zarinka was killed?"

"Evelyn called me early this morning."

"That's his sister?"

"Yes."

"When did she hear?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't she tell you how she heard her brother was killed?"

"No, she didn't."

"And you didn't ask?"

"No," Chick said shortly. "I didn't ask."

"How long have you known them?" The inspector came closer and sat down on the other side of the bed.

Chick hesitated. "About six years."

"Pretty well off, aren't they?"

"I believe so. It's rather a personal matter, hardly one for direct inquiry." His sarcasm was lost.

"Don't you ever get personal with a girl you're go-

ing to marry? I suppose you're not interested in money."

"Not particularly," Chick said after a moment. "I've enough to keep me going."

"From what?"

"My father's estate. Not that it's any of your business."

The telephone rang by the bed. Chick reached to answer, but the inspector already had it.

"Ask Miss Zarinka to come up, please." He hung up and grinned at Chick. "There's no use getting mad, buddy. All your personal life's going to be dragged out and hung on a line and looked at—until we find out whether it's clean or dirty!"

Chick slipped on his socks without replying, then shed the bathrobe and got into underwear, clean white flannels and a sports shirt.

The inspector stood at the window, looking out, and when the buzzer rang at the apartment door he said, "Wait. The sergeant will let her in."

Chick deliberately brushed his hair and walked into the living-room. Evelyn, white and distraught, stood looking at the big form of the man who had admitted her.

"It's the police, darling," Chick explained. "I suppose we have to expect this sort of thing." He led her to a divan and sat down beside her, holding her hand. "This is Sergeant Archer of the Homicide Squad. Inspector Davis is in the other room. He's been asking me some questions."

The sergeant's round face softened with an affable grin. He eased his bulk into a big chair and sat looking at them. The inspector came in from the other

room, glanced sharply at the girl, then at the picture on the mantel, and said, "Mr. Hartshorn tried to warn you we were up here, Miss Zarinká, but I didn't give him a chance."

He took another chair and sat silent for a few moments, his crinkly eyes shifting from Chick to Evelyn. "Were you two together last night?"

"For dinner." Chick opened a humidior beside the divan and took out a box of cigars. The sergeant took two, lit one and put the other in his pocket. The inspector refused. Chick, who was not a cigar smoker, lit a cigarette for himself and said through the smoke, "Miss Zarinka—"

"Can speak for herself," the inspector interrupted.

"We had dinner together at Bennett's Inn on Long Island." Evelyn's hand tightened its clasp on Chick's. "I had an appointment—"

"At night?" the sergeant asked.

"Yes," she flared suddenly, "at night! Was there anything wrong in that?"

"I don't know," said the sergeant. "Tell us."

"Chick drove me back from Bennett's Inn—"

"That's near Flushing, isn't it?" the inspector said musingly.

She nodded and went on, "—to my home in Forest Hills. He left me there, and I got my own car and drove in town."

"To where?"

"It was a private matter," Chick said.

The inspector's crinkly eyes glinted. "Keep out of this, please I asked Miss Zarinka where she went."

"I went to talk to Duncan Maclain." She released her hand from Chick's and took a handkerchief from

her bag. The inspector and the sergeant exchanged glances.

"You must have been in trouble if you went to see Maclain."

"That's not so!"

"But your brother was," said the sergeant.

"I don't know." Evelyn's throat spasmodically tightened. The sudden, unexpected questions were confusing, coming so soon after the shocking news of Paul's death. She felt that her most innocent remark might be construed into something unfavorable toward Charles. With Paul gone, he was the only person who kept the great emptiness of life from crushing her.

Vague apprehensions crept over her, nameless and unformed, but nevertheless real. It was unfair and cruel for the police to attack and harass innocent people at the very height of agony in an emotional crisis. She wanted Paul's murderer apprehended, but, over and above that, she wanted peace and security with the man beside her. She knew Chick had nothing whatsoever to do with her brother's death and realized at the same time that her lack of self-possession was dangerously apt to make it appear that he had. The thought steadied her. She began to think more clearly and answer more calmly.

"Let's get this straight." The inspector took two quarters from his vest pocket and began to click them together. "You had an appointment to see Duncan Maclain last night, but you weren't in trouble, and your brother wasn't in trouble."

"I didn't say that. I said I didn't know whether or not my brother was in trouble."

"Then it wasn't a social call?"

"No. I was worried about Paul."

"You thought he was up to some mischief?"

"I didn't think any such thing. Actually, I was afraid he might be involved with some unscrupulous woman." She stopped. Chick waited expectantly for one of the officers to make the obvious remark in bad French about *cherchez la femme*.

Instead, the sergeant scratched himself and said, "Dames drive a guy bats."

"So that's all you know." The inspector stood up, returned the quarters to his pocket and stretched. Then he whirled around and pointed a finger at Chick. "And where did you go last night—after you left this young lady?"

"To a movie."

"To a movie!" the inspector repeated mockingly. "Everybody goes to a movie. What movie?"

"*The Road to Glory* at the Rivoli."

"And after you got out you came right home?"

"That's it," said Chick. "Right home."

"I thought so." The inspector's words became venomous. "And how much of Paul Zarinka's money did you drop on the stock market through Ludlow Brothers, Mr. Hartshorn?"

The abrupt question made Evelyn curiously sick. She looked at the towering man in the gray suit through a mist which made him wavery and ethereal. From somewhere beside her she heard Chick's voice answering. "I don't know what you're talking about."

A welcome relief came in the buzz of the front door. The sergeant scrambled out of the deep chair with unexpected alacrity and picked his straw hat from the floor beside him. Chick, as if glad of the interruption,

strode across the room quickly and opened the door.

There was a curious expression of disbelief visible on the faces of the watchers as Schnucke preceded Duncan Maclain into the living-room and led him to the chair just quitted by the sergeant. Behind the captain, mopping a perspiring brow, merriment dancing in his yellow eyes, stood Spud Savage. He closed the door softly, said, "Hello, Chick," and stood with his back against the door, looking inquiringly at the two men.

"This is Inspector Davis of the Homicide Squad and Sergeant Archer, Spud," Chick said soberly.

Spud's mouth widened in a pleasant smile. He seized the inspector's hand and shook it cordially, then turned to the sergeant. "How are you, Sergeant?" he said and took the big man's hand in his own. "It's nice to meet you again. Did you hear that, Dunc? Miss Zarinka's here—and guess who else? Sergeant Archer and Inspector Davis of the Homicide Squad!"

Maclain bowed toward Evelyn, sensing her location with uncanny accuracy. "You have my deepest sympathy, Miss Zarinka." A perceptible change took place in his voice. "And it's so jolly to see you and the sergeant so soon again, Inspector. Did you climb up outside and come in the window? I understood you were returning to headquarters when you left us downstairs a few minutes ago!"

Chapter Seven: GRENADE TECHNIQUE

EVELYN ZARINKA found herself immeasurably relieved at Spud's words. The man in the gray suit was not Inspector Davis as he claimed. Whoever he was, he must have lied when he stated that Charles had been play

ing the market with money received from her brother. She relaxed and leaned back on the divan, regaining courage from the very presence of Maclain.

"It seems to be a gala day for the private dicks." The man with the crinkly eyes looked truculent, then made a quick mental estimate of Spud Savage and decided to be friendly. His companion's round face wore a ludicrous look of consternation.

"So you're turning from private to public now." Spud folded his arms but made no move to leave the door. "Trilby's the name, isn't it? And this mock orange with you—unless I'm mistaken—is good old Alf Shane."

"My! My!" exclaimed Duncan Maclain, quizzically raising his right eyebrow, "this is charming! Spud, you're sure you and Schnucke haven't made a mistake and led me into a lady's bedroom? I never expected to find this pair of divorce artists anywhere else. Suppose we get down to facts before a couple of real policemen come in and begin to get tough."

"You've got nothing on us." Shane gravitated toward the gray-suited Bill Trilby, and together they rested themselves half on, half off, the enamel box housing the cold radiator, their backs toward a large window overlooking Park Avenue.

"We came up here on business, same as you."

"It must have been serious." Maclain reached down with one finger and scratched Schnucke's head. "And there must have been a lot of money involved—more than you could make by peeping through keyholes."

"What do you mean?" Trilby demanded.

"Impersonating an officer. They send out the radio cars to pick up guys who do that, and revoke their

licenses—and send them up to play on the Ossining baseball team.”

“That’s a lie.” Alf Shane paled. “Mr. Hartshorn misunderstood us. Bill showed him a badge—”

“And he guessed your names,” put in Spud. “That makes it just ducky. Since we’re getting nowhere, I think we’d better call up the real pair and let them talk to these two ladyfingers. Maybe they’ll be easy on them.”

“Archer particularly,” Maclain agreed. “I heard he kicked a man on the shin four years ago, and he just limped out of the Orthopedic Hospital yesterday. Of course they wouldn’t take any action like that against fellow detectives!”

“Now listen,” Trilby said pleadingly. “We’re in a jam, see. I know it as well as you do—but, after all, there’s such a thing as honor among thieves.”

“One more crack like that,” Spud warned him, “and the traffic cops’ll be picking the two of you out of a Park Avenue puddle. For your own sake, we’d better get down to cases. I don’t like you, and Dunc doesn’t like you—and the dog doesn’t like you. Mr. Hartshorn and Miss Zarinka are more than clients of ours—they’re friends. The best thing you can do is talk, and talk quick! Who sent you up here, and why?”

Bill Trilby shed his mask of friendliness and became ingratiating. He had heard well-confirmed rumors that Spud Savage was a man of violent temper with an ingrained streak of homicidal tendencies when rubbed the wrong way. He glanced around the room, hoping to find a more friendly face to which he could direct his appeal, but even the peaceful Schnucke disappointed him. He thought he detected a rather baleful

gleam in her dark-gray eyes. "I came up here for a client."

"I know that," said Maclain. "Who was it?"

"That isn't very ethical," Trilby pleaded.

"It's a good word—if you had any idea what it meant." Maclain's voice was impatient. "You've jumped from a divorce case into a murder, Bill. I'm afraid you're out of your depth. Who sent you?"

"Go on, Bill, tell him," said Shane. "What's the use?"

"Hewitt's the name." Trilby twisted uneasily on his perch. "Howard Hewitt."

Evelyn drew in her breath sharply. "That's impossible!"

"Nothing's impossible in this business, miss. Your brother's been playing around on the wrong side of the street with our client's wife."

"That's interesting." Spud's arms folded tighter across his chest. "Are you selling murders now as a sideline?"

Maclain heard the movement as Alf Shane stood up. He lifted his hand from Schnucke's head and held it up placatingly. "Don't be mean to them, Spud. They're just a couple of nice boys trying to make a living. Let's see if we can't help them along. Miss Zarinka told me last night that Howard Hewitt is an extremely jealous man, and that her brother had been seen dining with Mrs. Gladys Hewitt. I suppose *you* know where." he shot in the direction of Bill Trilby.

"Several times at the Hi-de-Ho, twice at the Biltmore and once at the Commodore during the two months we've been on the case."

"That seems to check." Maclain dropped his hand

again and resumed scratching Schnucke. "I presume you have an airtight alibi for your client last night."

"His wife was at the Hi-de-Ho," said Alf Shane.

"Shut up, you fool," Trilby snapped at him without thinking.

"And your client?" Maclain persisted gently. "Where was he?"

"You can't pump us!"

"But we're trying hard," said Spud. "Come clean. Where was he?"

"How do I know? Howard Hewitt was paying me to trail his wife, not to trail him."

"You must have quit your usual methods, Bill. Spud and I used to hear that you had no objection to taking money from both parties in a divorce case and leaving them tied up together in one grand, involuntary reunion, with operatives' reports that they were two-timing each other."

"Are you going to let that pass, Bill?" Shane demanded.

"Yes," said Trilby. "It's slander, but I'll let it pass. You can believe what you like, Captain Maclain, but we don't know a thing about this case except that we were paid to get the dope on Mrs. Hewitt and Paul Zarinka. We know where she was last night, but we don't know where Howard Hewitt was—and don't care."

"And this morning you put your heads together, didn't you?" Maclain asked sadly. "You decided, with a corespondent dead, that the graft wasn't good any longer, and you thought you'd come up here and see if you could get some information from Mr. Harts-horn first and maybe sell him some information about his fiancée's brother second. It sounds awfully bad,

Bill, for a man of your high standing. I'd hate to think that you and Shane would stoop to anything so low as extortion."

"I'm willing to keep my mouth shut—if you will," said Trilby.

Maclain stood up, and Schnucke got to her feet beside him. "I'm not going to make any agreement with you, one way or the other, but I'm going to tell you this: Both of you'd better keep your mouths shut about anything you know. Now get out of here."

Spud stepped aside from the door and allowed the overeager firm of Trilby and Shane to pass through unmolested. He slammed the door behind them and turned back furiously to Maclain. "They're lying in their teeth, Dunc, both of them! You know they're lying in their teeth!"

The captain sat down in his chair again and said placidly, "Sure, Spud, sure they're lying. Let's try to find out why, and how much."

He turned his dark sightless eyes in Evelyn's direction and seemingly moved them from her to Harts-horn. Once, the night before, she had felt creepily that Duncan Maclain could see, although the blankness of his gaze belied that. Unconsciously she moved closer to Chick. As though he divined her feeling, Maclain gave her a sympathetic smile.

"You arrived at a most opportune moment," Chick remarked. "That pair had us fooled completely."

"It's not difficult to fool people under stress," the captain declared. "It's cruel, perhaps, but not difficult—and it's part of their business."

"I tried to get in touch with you earlier this morning," Spud told Evelyn. He settled himself in a com-

fortable chair facing Maclain. The drink of scotch Chick had poured before the arrival of Trilby and Shane stood close to hand. Spud drank it with relish and leaned back. "Your maid told us you were coming up here: hence our visit. We've had a busy morning, with plenty of visitors ourselves—first the D. A., then the real Davis and Archer."

"Dearborn came to consult you about Paul's—" Evelyn hesitated. All morning she had been stumbling over the word *murder*, unable to actually connect it with her brother.

"Fartly that, and partly because he'd learned you'd been to see me," Maclain explained. "Last night you came to me for help. Today I'm coming to you. There's no need for you to be under any more expense, since Claude Dearborn has agreed to foot the bill."

Evelyn's mind flashed back to Trilby's accusation against Chick, and she said quickly, "I still want to know the truth, Captain Maclain. I must know."

"You shall," he said firmly, "but for the moment let's look at things as they stand: We have definite information from the D. A. that your brother was collecting evidence against Benny Hoefle—"

"That's proof enough for me," Spud interjected, "that Hoefle killed your brother, Miss Zarinka."

"And proof enough for me," Maclain said quickly, "that Hoefle didn't, Spud. Hoefle never committed a murder in his life. He's far too clever for that, and manpower's far too cheap. Inspector Davis agreed with me that anyone working on this case has a wide field to search. It's grown wider with the injection of Trilby and Company onto the scene, although Hewitt and his wife look almost too obvious as suspects."

"His wife?" Chick asked, surprised.

"Why not?" said Maclain. "Believe me, Miss Zarinka, I'm not trying to hurt you, but there're certain things I want to find out. Do you think there's any possibility that your brother was tired of Gladys Hewitt?"

"I'm afraid he was never fond of any one woman for long." Evelyn said numbly.

"I get it. It's not bad, Dunc. We've got three prospects from friend Trilby—Howard Hewitt, the jealous husband; Gladys Hewitt, the passé sweetheart—and the possibility of another woman! Any one of the three might have been by in that taxi!"

"Or any one of Hoefle's hirelings," said Chick.

"Exactly," Spud agreed. "That leaves a raft of people who might have tossed the bomb in the car."

"Tossed?" Duncan Maclain's forehead wrinkled in surprise. "Whatever gave you the idea it was tossed in there, Spud?"

"Well, how do you think it got there?"

"Figure it out for yourself," said Maclain. "Paul Zarinka's car was parked within two blocks of his office. Nobody knew what time he was going to leave. He was killed with a Mills hand grenade, not a percussion bomb—and it takes a Mills grenade about ten seconds to explode after the plug's pulled. It was pouring rain and the chances were that the windows would be closed in his sedan. Would you sit around the scene of a prospective murder for two hours in a taxi, waiting for your victim to appear, then let him climb into his car and drive off before you went by in your taxi and threw a grenade in the window of his sedan? It's messy, Spud, terribly messy. Suppose—when the window broke—he picked it up and tossed it out again

and took the number of your car?"

"It does sound cockeyed—the way you put it," Spud agreed, "but I still say—how did it get there?"

"It was placed there," Maclain declared, "by somebody who got out of Paul Zarinka's car—probably the man who was seen by the officer on the beat. There's a lot of difference, Spud, between placing and tossing—I think we'll find that out."

Chapter Eight: A CHOICE OF CASE

DUNCAN MACLAIN had the utmost confidence in his partner, Spud Savage. They had served together in the army during the war and afterward, through the most trying period of Duncan Maclain's life, the warm-hearted Spud was his constant friend and companion. It was really Spud's appreciation of Maclain's unusual intellect, diversified knowledge and hypersensitivity of the senses which led them into the hazardous field of private investigation.

Spud was a natural athlete, far above the average. Casual clients of the firm were inclined to classify him as the strong-arm man and to underestimate his mental ability. His business acumen, however, was not to be disparaged. He realized the enormous publicity value which might accrue to a figure such as Maclain, and the friendly and flattering interest which the press took in Schnucke and her master was as often as not due to Spud's adroit manipulations.

It was Spud, always solicitous of Maclain's security and peace of mind, who secured the attractive and capable Rena Martin for Maclain's secretary, and—as Rena maintained—it was Spud who married her and

turned her into a combination housekeeper and amanuensis to obviate the chances of her ever getting a better job!

Rena had staffed the Maclain-Savage penthouse with a Negro couple, Sarah and Cappo Marsh. Sarah effectively dominated the immaculate kitchen, turning out succulent meals which kept the captain and Spud fighting their waistlines. Sarah also, without trouble, dominated her gigantic Negro husband, who intermixed the job of houseman and chauffeur for Maclain's Packard sedan.

From 1917 to 1930 Duncan Maclain had borne his hopeless blindness with an astounding fortitude and cheerfulness. He had fought it with a savage relentlessness, spending every waking moment and utilizing every device which his clever mind could conceive to make himself as independent as any man who had the use of his eyes.

Only Spud and occasionally Rena were aware that he knew miserable days of bitterness when he felt that he was a helpless burden on his friends. Those days of bitterness disappeared with the coming of Schnucke in 1930. Immediately, with the ability restored to him to come and go as he pleased, all of Maclain's highly developed talents were released for use. They came rushing to the fore, turning the blind captain into a superman of intelligence and efficiency which left both Spud and Rena a trifle breathless.

At first Spud was worried at Maclain's insistence that he be allowed to go out and negotiate the difficult and hazardous traffic of the city on his own. He knew the Seeing Eye dogs and their blind masters were trained together with skill and intelligence; still, Spud

felt some hesitation in trusting his friend to the sole guidance of a dog.

For some weeks after Maclain's return to New York Spud followed him surreptitiously on every trip he made around the city. He summed it up to Rena by saying, "Schnucke's a better guide for him than I am. They walk so fast through the crowds I can hardly keep up with them. After seeing her lead him around a low awning which might have bumped his head—I give up! I probably wouldn't have noticed it myself!"

On his own part, Maclain contended, and with justification, that he could get more information on an investigation than Spud, and without arousing suspicion. It was a natural thing for a blind man to ask questions. "What's the size of this room? What's this object I have in my hand, and what building is that across the street?" Policemen on duty, passers-by and casual acquaintances went out of their way to answer such things with courtesy and accuracy and considered them all natural when they came from Duncan Maclain. Consequently, the captain was able to build up a clear and comprehensive picture of a crime, undisturbed by outside complications and extraneous materials which might have thrown Spud or the police off the track.

It was Schnucke's duty to lead him where he wanted to go, and she obeyed unhesitatingly the commands "Forward," "Left" or "Right," stopping at each curb until Maclain found the step down with foot or cane. Her warning signal to her master of danger ahead or the presence of something she did not understand was *disobedience*—for nothing Maclain could say would force her to go into a situation which she considered

unsafe for her master.

Naturally, to negotiate the streets of the city Maclain had to have a mental picture of where he was going and how to get there. A walk in Central Park meant turning right as he left the apartment, crossing West End Avenue, traversing the difficult intersection of Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue by a stop on the triangular island where the subway station split the two streets, proceeding thence across Columbus Avenue under the El, and at Central Park West crossing the street where he found the entrance to the park.

That was simple enough, but his journeys through other parts of the city were subjects of wonder and admiration to his friends.

Built into a corner of his office, concealed behind the paneling, was a large metal file containing in more than 100 flat drawers a sectional map of Greater New York. It was the most expensive piece of equipment in Maclain's establishment, for on its wood surface was grooved every street and alleyway, with the names of the most important appearing in the grooves in tiny raised letters of Braille.

The captain consumed his luncheon of grilled lamb-chops, fresh green peas and a salad with scarcely a word to Spud and Rena. One of the strongest reasons for their compatibility together was the fact that Spud and his wife reacted so sympathetically to Maclain's moods.

In his office he asked Rena to bring him the sections of the map which covered lower downtown and Greenwich Village. For more than an hour he sat on the floor, consuming endless cigarettes and letting his fingers travel over the grooves of the streets, while

Schnucke stood by with lolling tongue and watched him inquiringly. She was always as interested in the maps as a trained bird dog is in the sight of a shotgun. It had not taken her long to learn that their appearance preceded the joy of a walk with her master.

It was nearly three when Spud came in and asked, "Where are you bound?"

"Centre Street. I want to look over the scene."

"Can I help? It's a filthy day."

"I don't mind that," said Maclain. "But you can help. Get a file on Howard Hewitt and his wife, and while you're at it, dig up what you can about Trilby and Shane."

Spud slipped his hands into his pockets and stood looking down at the maps on the floor. "What about Hoefle? I thought you were working on him."

"I am, but he won't be as careful with me around as with you. I have a plan in mind, but I'm keeping it to myself. I don't want to hear you grouching about it."

"Go ahead!" Spud spoke good humoredly, but his pleasant face showed worry. "Run foul of Hoefle, and you'll have half the thugs in New York trailing you and Schnucke around in a parade."

"That's part of the idea," Maclain said, grinning.

"Well, watch your step, and don't fall in any man-holes—they'll be taking off the covers ahead of you."

"Schnucke'll see them if I don't," Maclain laughed. "And what put that idea into your silly head?"

"You did—you and the mice and the whiffs of poison gas that makes 'em wriggle."

"Sometimes," the captain said, with a touch of admiration, "you are more of a nuisance to me than a help, but it's an interesting idea, isn't it?"

"It's so interesting," Spud told him, "that if I hear of you prowling around any tunnels I'll take your dog and cane away and give you a tin cup."

"If I'm not back for dinner, don't worry."

"I won't," said Spud. "I'll go out and bring you back."

The captain waited until the door closed behind his friend, then went to the desk and telephoned Sergeant Archer at headquarters. Ten minutes later he was standing on 72d Street in front of the apartment.

As the captain paused just outside of the door, Mike the doorman said solicitously, "Your car's not here, Captain Maclain. You want to sit down inside while I send for it? Cappel took it to the garage half an hour ago."

"Thanks, no. I told him he could go. I'll take a cab."

The doorman raised his whistle to his lips, but before he could blow it a cruising taxi driver swooped in to the curb, swinging wide his door. The captain made no move to step forward under Mike's umbrella but asked, "Do you know that cab?"

"No, sir. He was cruising."

"Send him away," Maclain said curtly. There was a rustle of skirts close by him as two women stepped from the apartment house. "Wait, Mike," Maclain continued, before the doorman had a chance to speak. "Let the ladies have the taxi. I'm in no hurry."

"Certainly, Captain Maclain."

One of the women said sweetly, "Oh, thank you so much," and added, "What a beautiful dog!" Then, as she got into the waiting cab, she noticed Maclain's blindness. He grinned, as they drove off, for he heard her remark: "But he *is* blind, my dear! How could he

possibly know we wanted a cab!"

He grinned further, too, for he strongly suspected that the man in the driver's seat was muttering things which he could not hear. The cab had arrived altogether too precipitately. He might be wrong, but there was no use taking chances.

Mike whistled and another cab came from the ranks. "Joseph Cappabello," Mike said. "Number 6893."

"Okay," said the captain and got in. He worded his directions to Cappabello in such a way that the driver was forced to answer. As soon as Joe replied, Maclain knew there was a man in the driver's seat who had carried him many times before. Duncan Maclain never forgot the sound of a voice.

Chapter Nine: UNDERGROUND PROSPECT

MACLAIN left the taxi at the lower end of Centre Street near City Hall Park, urging out the reluctant Schnucke with a firm word. She enjoyed walking with her master. Still more she enjoyed the delights of riding in a car and sticking her large head inquisitively out of the window at each stop for traffic lights.

Perspiring under dripping raincoats, Sergeant Archer and a pock-marked little man, whom Archer introduced as Sergeant Rindermann, were waiting for Maclain's arrival in answer to his phone call. Rindermann had been attached to the New York Police Department since 1928 and was a member of the Motor Vehicle Homicide Squad, which was formed at that time.

The real duties of the squad of specialists were to determine the question of guilt in fatal motor accidents and supply necessary technicalities in such terms

as to convince a skeptical jury. While the killing of Paul Zarinka did not fall directly within the squad's jurisdiction, Inspector Davis was utilizing Rindermann's uncanny ability to read the story from the time Paul's car left the curb until it stopped for the traffic light at Canal Street.

Rindermann briefly told his findings to the captain as he pattered along beside him up the rain-drenched street. From sketches made the night before of the almost-obliterated tire tracks, Rindermann had checked Officer Galligan's statement that Paul Zarinka's car was parked on the east side of Centre, between Walker and White streets, headed north. The car had left the curb, driven north slowly, and stopped at Canal Street for the light.

The captain said nothing until they reached the place where Zarinka's car had stood at the curb and Sergeant Archer explained, "This is where he left from on his last ride."

Maclain tapped the edge of the curb with his cane. "Is the traffic too thick for you to walk with me over the approximate route he followed, Sergeant Rindermann?"

"It's pretty thick, Captain Maclain," said Archer, "but I'll damn soon thin it out." He beckoned to a patrolman across the street, who came up on the run.

While their rubber-coated escort diverted the curious drivers of passing cars and trucks, Schnucke, Maclain and Rindermann paced off the two short blocks to the scene of the explosion. The captain stood for a moment in the street, mentally picturing the wreckage which lay there the night before. "Right," he ordered Schnucke and carefully paced off the distance

to the sidewalk. Again he stood still, swept off his hat and mopped his brow, which was damp with perspiration and rain. A crowd of small boys began to form about them, and Sergeant Archer brusquely ordered them away.

"You said this morning, Sergeant Archer," Maclain observed finally, "that a taxi with Michelin tires passed Zarinka's car."

"That's right." The sergeant glowered at the boys, who had stopped a safe distance away.

"Yes," Rindermann put in, "we know that much anyhow."

"I'd like to know more," Maclain suggested. "Was Zarinka's car stopped or was it moving when the taxi went by?"

"It was stopped," Rindermann told him decisively. "That's easy."

"And the taxi turned to the right into Canal Street?"

Rindermann nodded his head approvingly.

"Not bad, Captain," said Sergeant Archer. "I suppose you figure if Zarinka's sedan was stopped for a red light and the taxi went on through, that it must have turned to the right. I don't know whether they have the same rule in other cities or not—that cars can make a right turn on red."

"It's interesting," Maclain agreed, "but not exactly the point I had in mind. Did you notice anything unusual, Rindermann, in the course of Zarinka's driving from his parking place to here?"

Rindermann's eyes went back down the street and surveyed the line of their walk. Mentally he measured the distance to the opposite corner of Centre Street from where they stood.

"By God," he exclaimed, "why did he turn to the right just before he stopped? Is that it?"

"That's it, all right. Since the taxi went by him after he was stopped, it's obvious he didn't turn in to allow it to pass."

"Then why do you think he turned in?" Archer demanded slowly.

"Why do people generally pull in to the curb?"

"I get you," said Sergeant Archer. "To let somebody else out of the car."

"The officer on this beat saw someone in the car, as I understand it?"

"That's right," Archer affirmed. "The man crossed the street and got in the car some time before Zarinka, but Galligan didn't see him get out and doesn't know whether he was in there when Zarinka got in."

"I think we can take that for granted."

"Captain Maclain's right," Rindermann put in.

"If we go back over it, it's pretty clear. The man got in the car and waited for Zarinka. He didn't get out between the time the car left the curb and its stop for the light at Canal Street—but he did get out there."

"That doesn't prove he was the killer," Archer protested.

"No," Maclain shook his head, "it doesn't prove he was the killer, but it narrows things down. Your hunt now is for a man who knew Zarinka and Zarinka's car, and a man whom Zarinka knew himself. There's also a possibility that he lives on Long Island or on the route Zarinka would take on his way to Forest Hills."

"You're bucking all the evidence, Captain Maclain. The department's combing Brooklyn—from Myrtle

Avenue to Stillwell—for anyone who might have had it in for Zarinka. Have you forgotten what he told Galligan about the Sea Beach express?”

“Not at all, Sergeant. If the man who killed Zarinka lived on the Sea Beach line and intended to take the subway here at Canal Street, I don’t believe he would wait around for Zarinka to drive him the short distance from where the car was parked to the station here.”

“The inspector doesn’t believe that either. He thinks the man got in Zarinka’s car to talk to him, and I think the same thing.”

“And I don’t,” said Maclain. “That man didn’t get in the car just for the purpose of talking to Zarinka. Since he knew it was Zarinka’s car, he knew also where Zarinka was working. If he had wanted to talk to him, he could have gone upstairs to the Homicide Bureau and seen Zarinka there.”

“Maybe he didn’t want to be seen himself,” Rindermann suggested. “Miss Burberry was working there, too, until just before Zarinka left.”

Maclain got his bearings by tapping the curb with his cane, ordered Schnucke forward, and started slowly up Centre Street toward headquarters. “That’s a good idea, too, Rindermann. So far this afternoon you and Archer have helped me clinch two things: Paul Zarinka’s murder was premeditated. The killer waited for him in the car under the pretext that he wanted Zarinka to drive him home—perhaps to Long Island—perhaps to drop him en route. He either knew beforehand, or found out after he talked with Zarinka in the car, that Zarinka wasn’t going directly home. He got out, and as he left the car, dropped the hand grenade

quietly on the floor in the back. That gave him sufficient time to get away."

"What excuse did he give for getting out?" Archer wanted to know.

Maclain raised his cane and pointed in the direction of the B. M. T. subway station. "There's his excuse, Sergeant. He said he'd take the B. M. T. Paul Zarinka's last statement must have been of tremendous importance to him. Desperately wounded, it looks as if he tried to tip off vital information to the police. He must have said the few words uppermost in his mind before he died. If a man normally rode home with him to Long Island or was dropped on the way, a change in the procedure would have attracted Zarinka's attention. Deviations from the norm stick with us, Sergeant, but the normal is easily forgotten! My contention is that Paul Zarinka mentioned 'the Sea Beach Subway—the last express' because it was uppermost in his consciousness at the time of his death—uppermost because the killer left Paul Zarinka's car with the statement that he was going to take it, a thing he normally never did."

Archer stood silent, rubbing his chin, then hurried for a few steps to catch up with Maclain before he remarked, "That's a type of reasoning that comes hard to me, Captain, but you may be right—and I'll not overlook it. Have you thought the man might have left anything else in the back of the car along with the grenade?"

"The mice? I hope not." Maclain's forehead wrinkled. "If the man who got out of Paul Zarinka's car left those mice there. I've wasted an entire afternoon."

"Then you know what the mice are for?"

"I told the D. A. this morning what they could have been for." Maclain smiled. "Zarinka could have used them to warn him of poison gas."

"In his car?"

"Hardly, Sergeant. I think before this case is finished all of us will be underground."

"There's a cheerful outlook!" Sergeant Archer clipped the end off a bad cigar with a thumbnail and flipped the piece of tobacco into the gutter. "Where will you find poison gas around New York?"

"Just where I said," Maclain told him firmly. "Underground."

Chapter Ten: THE WORD FROM MADONNA

ABOUT the only way in which Benny Hoefle ever played fair with the public of New York was to give them a decent dinner and a good floor show in his Hi-de-Ho Club in Greenwich Village.

Some pretty good tax experts from the Department of Internal Revenue had raised eyebrows inquiringly at the amount of income shown by the garish, awninged resort on Sheridan Square; but, since Benny cheerfully paid his large income tax, it was not part of their duties to delve into the intricacies of his low food costs and the exorbitant prices charged his guests. Actually, Benny Hoefle found the Hi-de-Ho a grand front, for among his other activities he was an organizer of no mean ability.

Whenever he felt himself sicken over the gouging hands of the government he sat back and formed a mental picture of Alcatraz. This enabled him to draw his tax check with a satisfied grin.

The Hi-de-Ho Club itself was a modernistically re-decorated hang-over from the speak-easy days. It offered a lobby done in black and white checks, and a better-than-average dance floor set like a square yellow diamond in a center of chrome leather chairs with plumbing arms and legs.

At the rear of the restaurant was a stage boasting a crinkled curtain of silver which looked tarnished in the daylight. Since the activities of the club were for the most part confined to electric-lighted hilarity, the tarnish made little difference, and the music of Willie Weiser's orchestra which occupied the stage was usually hot enough to keep the curtain up and at a glowing red.

A billboard dominated each side of the canopied entrance, one of them given over to the talents of Willie Weiser's aggregation, and the other displaying pinkly the seductive curves of the glorious Miss Amy Arden, costumed in a brevity commonly reserved for eme:gence from the bath.

Amy's talents might never have placed her in the spotlight of a Broadway revue, but they were sufficiently good drawing cards to keep her on Benny's payroll at \$75 a week. With the aid of Willie Weiser's windjamming cornetist to cover an occasional sour note, she could put over a torch song which saltened up the slightly alcoholic eyes of her listeners.

Her tap dancing was loud enough to cover irregular rhythm; and her voice and pedal dexterity together were worth at least \$10 a week. The other \$65 she earned honestly by making the hardened house electrician gasp with admiration every time he threw a spot on the powdered whiteness of her figure.

Amy, propped up in a bedful of pillows in her apartment on West 18th Street, was nakedly bathing in the blast from a whirring electric fan. Outside the rain fell steadily and straight, undisturbed by the faintest breeze which might relieve the mugginess of the room. The two front windows were open wide, allowing the sound of passing traffic four stories below to filter noisily in.

It was past 4:00 in the afternoon and dismal in the room. Amy had just finished her breakfast of pineapple juice and coffee without cream—a combination which she detested but clung to through professional fear of untimely fatness.

She was not due in the Hi-de-Ho until seven o'clock. She lighted a cigarette, patted the pillows into a cooler position, and settled back against them to absorb her daily diet of culture from the *Morning Star*, a tabloid which made things clearer to its many readers by profuse illustrations.

On the front page was the picture of a man. For a long time she lay back as if in a trance, holding the paper stiffly with both hands against the disturbing breeze of the fan. Smoldering brown eyes, looking black in the print, stared into hers. The cynical curve at the end of the mouth seemed to be laughing at her confusion. Beside her, on the ash tray, her cigarette burned untouched as she tried to connect the dancing headlines with the face below. BOMB BLAST WIPES OUT D. A. Automatically she snuffed out the cigarette which was burning a paper match and sending up acrid fumes. The breeze of the fan had turned cold.

She put the paper down, slipped from the bed and turned it off, watching the whirring blades with a

hypnotic fascination until they became distinguishable and stopped. The noise from the street below began to beat against her. She gently lowered the windows, returned to the bed and read the short text under the picture on page 1, turning to its continuance on page 3 with a kind of horrible somnambulism. When she reached the end she turned back as though she had never seen it before and read it through once more. She left the bed and stood at the bureau for a long time, looking at the girl in the mirror, wondering why riotous platinum-blond hair grew dark at the roots; how a mouth which looked aged and drawn could surmount the contour of such firm girlish breasts.

The buzzer in the kitchen was ringing insistently, short, emphatic rings, followed by the sustained impatient buzz of finger on button. The hands of the small clock on her bureau, telling her it was nearly 5:00, brought her to herself. She snatched up a light negligee, slipped her roseate-toenailed feet into straw sandals, and, with a gesture of ridding herself of a loathesome burden, flung the copy of the *Morning Star* under the bed.

She pushed the button in the kitchen to click the door downstairs and admit her insistent visitor, lighted another cigarette, and sat down in a wicker armchair, listening for the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

The clock hands crept to 5:02. She began to think that someone had made a mistake and rung the wrong apartment when the door she was watching opened without a preliminary knock.

When it closed, a slender youth in a belted raincoat was standing inside the room, watching her with round filmy eyes which held an expression of pleased sur-

prise at her appearance. He threw the raincoat open, disclosing a suit so light it approached pinkishness.

Neither of them spoke. Her figure grew smaller, huddled into the confines of the chair; her expression set itself unblinkingly with the fascinated terror of a bird. Wordlessly her visitor crossed to the bureau, took a comb from his pocket and slicked back his blond hair, grinning at her reflection in the mirror. A perfectly manicured hand brushed her toilet articles to one side. Lightly and effortlessly, he hoisted himself to the bureau and sat down in the space he had cleared, kicking his tiny feet in a soft tattoo against the drawer.

Vainly Amy tried to think of something to say and finally blurted out, "You have no right to come in here without knocking, Madonna."

His filmy eyes traveled around the room and came to rest on her again with a slight leer. "You better hope I go out the same way."

"What do you want?"

"They found your boy friend in pieces last night."

"You've taken a lot for granted. Paul Zarinka was never any boy friend of mine."

"More than that, perhaps."

"That's a lie!" She wished he were not sitting on the bureau by her lipstick. Her lips pleaded for its protective coloration to hide their whiteness. Somehow she could not grasp that Paul Zarinka was dead, that it was his picture which emblazoned the front page of the *Star*, that Madonna was perched on her bureau practicing his detestable trick of lighting a match with his thumbnail. Inside she felt cold and gray, for Madonna was not human. Madonna was death, a leering skeleton of destruction in a pinkish suit.

"I came up to be friendly." He talked as he always did, filtering words and smoke together through his perfect teeth.

"Why?" Her voice sounded unnatural to her. She forced herself to go on. "You're never friendly for nothing."

"Nobody's friendly for nothing. Have the flatties been to see you?"

"Why should they come here?"

"They'll be here quick enough. You'll hear them coming up the stairs—puffing and wheezing and slapping their big feet against the carpet."

"I'm not afraid. I've nothing to hide—and besides, they don't even know I knew Zarinka."

"They'll find out," said Madonna.

"How'll they find out?" she demanded. "I've done nothing wrong. Why should I be dragged into a murder? Is it a crime to love a man—to—to—" The words refused to come.

"They'll find out," said Madonna. "You better know what to tell them."

His tone warned her. She jumped to her feet, clutching the flimsy negligee about her under the insult of his myeloid eyes.

"Yes," she said. "You're low enough to do that—low enough to do anything—even stool!"

"I'm protecting your interests." His feet were beating rhythmically in tune with the ticking of the clock. "The D A's coming to the Hi-de-Ho at ten tonight. He's been informed that you want to talk to him."

"By you?"

"You talk wild, baby. I'm trying to keep you from talking wild tonight—talking yourself into a

suicide. You know too much—about some things—and not enough about what to say when you're asked. I'm here to tell you."

"Suppose I refuse?"

Madonna picked a nail file from the bureau beside him and carefully cleaned his nails. Ignoring her question, he said, "Dearborn's going to have a blind dick with him. A man and a dog. You don't need to worry, because he can't see you, but they tell me his ears are keen as hell."

"But there's nothing I could tell them." She shook her head hopelessly. "I don't know anything about Zarinka, Madonna—before heaven, I don't! He took me out a few times, that's all. I can't be hung for that! That's not going to hurt anyone!"

He slid off the bureau like a slim beautiful snake. "You saw a man named Hewitt at the Hi-de-Ho last night."

"I don't know him."

"I think you do." His eyes half closed. "He's the husband of the dame who was waiting in booth four—the one with all the diamonds. You know her."

"I've never seen her husband."

"I'm clearing your memory," Madonna told her, "and saving your life. His name's Howard Hewitt. He's five foot eleven and dark. His nose is slightly crooked—from a football accident. He's a pleasant duck—and high tempered as hell when he's mad. You remember that distinctly, because he quarreled with his wife last night and left the place in a rage—some time between nine-thirty and ten."

"How could I know all that about a man I've never talked to?" She roused herself as if from a bad dream.

"You have talked to him," Madonna continued relentlessly. "He's questioned you about his wife—and Zarinka. Given you money to keep an eye on them. I just wanted to let you know, because you're going to be questioned between shows tonight."

"And if I do this"—there was a sob in her voice—"if I lie like this—mix myself up in the murder of a man I really cared for—what then?"

Madonna walked to the door and, with it half open, turned around and flicked his lighted cigarette into the middle of the carpet.

"Then," he said softly, "you may go on tomorrow night."

Chapter Eleven: TRANSCRIBED ON RECORDS

"MR. SAVAGE: *'Whew! What the papers will do to that one—D. A. HIRES MAN AND DOG TO TRAIL MICE—I'd say that lets us out, Dunc. What about it?'*"

The talking record paused and went on:

"Captain Maclain: *'Maybe they weren't kidding. I think I'll help you, Claude. One hundred dollars a day—expenses—and a free hand. I'm interested in those mice.'*

"Mr. Dearborn: *'Good Lord, Maclain! You don't think those could have come from Paul's car. What in the name of heaven would Zarinka be doing with mice?'*"

"Captain Maclain: *'Some folks like them as pets. I don't think Zarinka falls in that class. Others use them for experimental purposes in the science of medicine. He hardly fits there, either. Maybe he had them along*

with him to warn him.'

"Mr. Springer: 'What do they do? Sing?"

"Captain Maclain: 'No. They wriggle and squeak whenever they get a whiff of poison gas.'"

There was a click from the big Capehart in the corner as the record of Rena's voice, repeating the conversation of the morning, stopped. Silence settled over six men comfortably disposed about Maclain's office—silence for everyone except Duncan Maclain.

From behind his desk he heard the creaking leather as Springer's bulky form moved uncomfortably in his chair in the corner; the rustle of Claude Dearborn's starched white evening shirt as the D. A. raised a cigar to his lips; the grunt of approval from Sergeant Aloysius Archer; the infinitesimal click as Inspector Davis thoughtfully snapped one fingernail with another; the swish of cloth on cloth as Spud settled himself more securely on the divan.

A room with people in it was constantly alive with sound to Duncan Maclain. No one is ever entirely motionless; there is always the involuntary wink of an eyelid, the twitch of a muscle, or, in sleep, the automatic function of breathing. Just as surely, from Maclain's view of the world, no one was ever entirely quiet.

From the moment he came in contact with anyone he followed their movements by sound, tracing their progress to a chair, keenly aware when they sat down or stood up, handled an object, or walked to a window, rustling drapes to gaze out on a world he could not see.

Oddly enough, Springer was the first to speak. "I might have knowed if I said anything, somebody'd take 'it down on a record. It'll teach me to keep my

mouth shut after this."

Spud laughed. "I learned that long ago in this room, Springer. Particularly when I start to make remarks about my wife. She's the guilty party who takes it down and makes the records."

"She's not the guilty party I'm looking for," said Inspector Davis.

"No," Archer agreed, turning pleadingly to the D. A. "I think we're wasting a lot of time, Mr. Dearborn. The only way we'll get anything out of Hoefle is to take him in and work it out of him."

"What do you use, Sergeant?" Spud asked. "Kindness and a telephone directory?"

"It's against the policy of the police department to use either intimidation or any form of physical violence in an attempt to obtain an admission from a suspect." The sergeant grinned. "This rule is rigidly enforced and upheld by all subordinates and superior officers—from the commissioner down."

"Good Lord," said Spud, "what book did you get that speech out of?"

"No book," said Archer soberly. "In twenty-two years with the department I've never seen anything but the utmost kindness used toward prisoners."

"Maybe I'm nuts," Spud told him.

Archer's round face resumed its grin. "You are," he said, "if you think you're going to bring a phonograph record into court to prove that we frame a defenseless man with a telephone book!"

"Did you say 'fram' or 'frame', Sergeant?"

This's what I get for revealing the secrets of my office." Maclain's face twitched with laughter. "But seriously, Sergeant, I thought we should get together

as quickly as possible and get a line-up on what we already know. I'm afraid even a rubber hose and a telephone book won't beat a quick solution out of things as they stand now. Spud and I have both been busy today. I'll let him tell you what he got on the Hewitts. He can do it better than I can."

"It won't take long." Spud locked his hands in back of his head. "Howard Hewitt's forty-seven, an engineer and a politician, clever in both. He's been with the Department of Gas, Water and Electricity for fourteen years."

"Where does he fit in?" asked Davis.

"That's what we're trying to find out. Two months ago he hired a couple of dirt diggers named Trilby and Shane."

"Now that's a pair," Archer said grimly, "that I'd break every rule in the department on. I thought they'd come into my life again someday."

"Well, they're back, all right." Spud grinned. "Hewitt had them trailing his wife. He married her out of the Follies. You can guess the rest. Her stage name was Gladys Gwynne."

"Don't tell me," the inspector said with a sigh, "that you're going to drag in the old, old story—May and December and a snake in the grass. I'm voting against Hewitt, for my part. We're working on a stiff that's been blown up with a bomb. I've been around homicides too long to figure that as a popular method of killing for jealous husbands."

"On the surface. I think you're right, Inspector," Maclain put in. "That was my first thought, too, but it clicks in another direction. You're overlooking Hewitt's connection as a city employee with the Depart-

ment of Gas, Water and Electricity."

"Now you've got me going," said Dearborn, speaking for the first time. "I'd like to know how to present that to a jury."

"I'll tell you." Maclain's hands folded themselves rigidly on the edge of the desk, like a child in school. "You just can't go down to Hammacher Schlemmer's and buy a Mills hand grenade. But a man familiar with the workings of the Police Department and the D. A.'s office might—I say *might*—know where to get one without arousing suspicion. There's been plenty of that sort of thing confiscated in gangster raids, hasn't there, Claude?"

"Plenty," declared Dearborn, "but if it's evidence, it's carefully guarded. Still—" He quit speaking and sat drumming his fingers on the arm of his chair.

"I'd like to get this out of my system," Spud went on. "You've already heard a record of what Evelyn Zarinka had to say. Howard Hewitt's jealous, his wife's young, and Paul Zarinka never had wings or played a harp, although he may be doing it now. Dunc believes that Zarinka knew the man who was waiting in the car for him. That checks with Hewitt. Patrolman Galligan saw the man cross the street and also had a look at him in the car. He thought the man looked familiar. That might check with Hewitt—"

"Or with any other one of five hundred people," the D. A. said.

"Which still doesn't eliminate Hewitt," Spud continued, "nor Hewitt's friends. Is Gilbert Fox on your list, Inspector?"

"Everybody's on my list—that is, everybody who had anything to do with the Zarinkas or their friends."

"That's a large order. I'll recommend Fox. He's an engineer, too—electrical, I believe. Anyhow, he works for the New York Electric Company."

"And what are his qualifications?" Dearborn asked. "I suppose he's another one that it'll take hypnotism to convict."

"It's my suspicious soul." Spud grinned at the discomfited D. A. "He's unmarried and lives in the same apartment hotel with the Hewitts—the Kingsley at 95th and West End Avenue."

"Not much to swear out a warrant on," said Archer.

"No, but his looks are. He's built along the lines of the ex-Rudolph Valentino. From what the help around the hotel have to offer, he's been seen more than once leaving the place with the glorious Gladys, his dark eyes glowing with passion."

Inspector Davis sighed. "If I start running in every man who's gazed on Gladys Hewitt, I'll finish up with a lovesick line-up that'll nauseate every detective at headquarters. Go on."

"I'm about finished. You can call your own shots, Inspector, but this fellow rather appealed to me. I think he'd kill for the love of a lady. Take it away, Dunc."

"I'll have Rena type us all a list that we can work on," said Maclain. "After all, it's not our business to arrest them or try them. All we can do's point them out. So far, we've Howard Hewitt, Gladys Hewitt—"

"She was at the Hi-de-Ho when Zarinka was killed," said Dearborn.

"And I read recently that the price of having murder done in New York, when you were somewhere else, had dropped from one hundred to seventy-five dol-

lars," Maclain continued placidly. "The idea is to dig out who's back of it, isn't it?"

"That's right," said Dearborn. "You win."

"—Gladys Hewitt, Gilbert Fox, Charles Hartshorn."

"Where does he come in?" Davis asked.

"In the same bracket with Evelyn Zarinka."

"What motive—" Dearborn began.

"I don't know," Maclain interrupted shortly. He reached for the jigsaw puzzle in his desk drawer and dumped it on the top. "It's like this puzzle, Claude. If I put all these pieces together, I have a picture. If I showed you one of them separately, you wouldn't have any idea what it belonged to—but the picture certainly wouldn't be complete without that piece."

"There's a trust fund in the Zarinka family—a lot of money, \$300,000. Charles Hartshorn is marrying into it. He's just one piece in the picture. Evelyn's just one piece in the picture—and Hoefle—and the other names we'll put on our list tonight, including this dancer, Amy Arden, whom we'll interview at ten—and the man who telephoned you the tip-off that she might have information."

"Then, when the pieces are all furnished, what are we going to see?" Dearborn left his chair and poured a drink of water from the carafe on Maclain's desk. "You're leaving a lot of blanks, Maclain. You've made some rather cryptic remarks today. Since I'm footing the bill, perhaps you'll tell me where the mice and the gas fit in."

"I'll exchange with you." The captain found two pieces of the puzzle which fitted, put them together and traced the irregular line around them with his forefinger.

"Zarinka was a member of your staff. What did he have on Hoeffle?"

The inspector hid a grin.

"Nothing," Dearborn said viciously. "Benny Hoeffle's back of the A. D. P.—that's the Amalgamated Delicatessens' Protective—but Tom Delancey was the president. They had a falling out, and Delancey was found beaten to death in a tunnel."

"What tunnel?"

Maclain forsook the jigsaw puzzle and leaned back in his chair as though he were trying to fathom the expression on Dearborn's face.

"The tunnel connecting the 42d Street Station of the Independent Subway with the Times Square Station of the I. R. T. The pinch was premature"—his gray eyes favored Davis and Archer with a sour look—"and the grand jury refused to indict Hoeffle. The newspapers have tried the case ever since, and me along with it."

"And you dropped it after that?" Maclain's voice was flat.

"No murder is ever dropped. Zarinka spent all his spare time on it. It became an obsession with him. That's why I had to call in outside help—meaning you."

"Thanks," said Maclain. "Now I'll give you the picture. It's dim, and there are a lot of pieces missing, but from reading the papers I understand that part of the evidence presented to the grand jury was that Hoeffle's hirelings had a habit of beating up men in tunnels. That was one case Zarinka handled. Another one, unless I'm mistaken, was against the brutality of subway guards who had beaten up a couple of people

caught putting slugs instead of nickels in the turnstiles. Going back further, Rena found out for me today that Zarinka had been interested in franchises granted the New York Electric for miles of tunnels to carry their wires under the street. Add Zarinka's last words—about the Sea Beach Subway. What is most noticeable?" He stopped.

Inspector Davis shifted uneasily in his chair.

The D. A. poured another half a glass of water, touched it to his lips, set it back on Maclain's desk, and sat down.

There was a strange alertness in the room—as though everyone present was straining to see an out-of-focus picture take its natural lines on a screen.

"By Judas, they come in strong, don't they?" Davis remarked heavily after a moment. He was chewing at his upper lip.

"Yes," said Maclain, "they come in heavily. The secret of Paul Zarinka's death lies somewhere in underground New York. Fortunately, our search has been narrowed down, or I doubt if we could ever find the answer."

"The mice?" asked Dearborn.

"Yes," said Maclain, "the mice. Paul Zarinka had been in tunnels, or was going in tunnels, where the public seldom goes. Tunnels like that are apt to be full of gas—dangerous gas. He lowered those mice in the cage down ahead of him before he went. It's a crude test, but effective."

"Tunnels!" Dearborn ran a nervous hand through his hair. "What in the devil would he be doing in tunnels?"

"He found something in them," Maclain's voice car-

ried conviction, "or hid something. I'm inclined to think it was the latter. We'd better be getting on to the Hi-de-Ho Club. It's getting late."

Chapter Twelve: TWO OF EACH NAME

FACED with the necessity of painful and distasteful duties in connection with her brother's death, Evelyn naturally turned to Chick. The trip to the morgue where she had to undergo the horrifying routine of identification and claim was nothing more than a blur—a succession of physical motions without thought. Numbly she allowed Chick to guide her from taxi to taxi and act as a buffer against the hardness of questioning officials. Scarcely grasping the fact that the paper-white effigy, numbered and lying on a slab, was once her brother, she nodded mutely, signed documents, and eagerly sought the clean wetness outside.

There were many things yet to be done, an undertaker to be engaged and friends to be notified. It was almost with disgust that she realized Chick had piloted her into Longchamps and ordered food, and that a cocktail was on the table before her.

"You have to eat, Evelyn," he said solicitously. "Finish your drink. You're haggard, played out—a drink will do you good."

She stared at him wordlessly across the table, wondering if it were she who had made the day discordant, or Chick. All morning she had felt an unnaturalness about him which she could not place, a vagueness in answering her questions, an avoidance of mentioning Paul's name. Twice she mustered up courage to ask him directly about Trilby's accusation. Each time she

failed. As much as she desired to do so, she could find no reason to warrant Trilby making such a statement without foundation.

With a gesture which hinted of desperation she gulped down the cocktail before her. "Why don't you tell me the truth about Paul?"

He twirled the stem of his cocktail glass between his fingers. "I don't know what you mean, darling."

She felt he was on the defensive and pressed home her attack. "You do know what I mean, Charles. You've been fencing with me all morning, keeping something from me as if I was a child. I can't stand it! You act as if I was suspicious of you. Don't you trust me?"

"Trust you?" His eyes came alive, and he reached one hand half across the table, then drew back. Evelyn felt she had lost, but continued to listen apathetically as he spoke: "You're overwrought, darling. You know I trust you. More than that, you know I love you—otherwise you wouldn't have said the things you have. You knew Paul better than I did, were closer to him. Is it likely I'd know anything about him which he hadn't confided to you?"

"I suppose not," she admitted wearily.

A waiter whisked away their glasses and placed the salad Chick had ordered before them. She pushed the food away gently. "Men have codes of honor that I hate! They confide things in each other which they wouldn't tell their own mother—and then lock them away from all women in some immortal, masculine vault where they keep them inviolate, regardless of what suffering it may cause to others!"

She spoke more bitterly than she knew, and the

hurt in Chick's face added to her sorrow.

"There's no answer I can make to that, Evelyn, except to ask you to believe in me and trust me." He leaned closer to her, across the table. "I swear, on my honor, I'm holding nothing back from you which you should know." He glanced contritely at the ornate clock over the door. "It's nearly half-past two—I'm going to put you in a cab and send you home. Lie down and get some rest, and let me attend to the details. I'll call for you at six tonight, and we'll have dinner some place on the Island. You'll feel better."

"Perhaps I will" She spoke a trifle more reassuredly. Everything was so upset, so topsy-turvy, that it was quite possible she had misjudged Chick and built a mirage of trouble out of the single discredited statement of a proven blackmailer.

When she left him outside, he watched her drive away. Fine lines of perplexity showed between his brows. He was still thoughtful when he boarded an I. R. T. subway train at 59th and Lexington and changed to a downtown express at Grand Central. Evelyn meant more to him than anything in the world. Money and position were trivial factors where her happiness was concerned.

Underneath Charles Hartshorn's dilettante exterior was a rock-hard substrata of aggressiveness when he had a definite object in view. He had deliberately adopted a course of action which he intended to follow at all costs. but his conversation with Evelyn at lunch had brought forth, unexpectedly, that the cost might be exorbitant unless he played his hand with care. Since the night before, murder had been added, a terrible additional hazard which no one could have

foreseen.

His lips were set grimly when he alighted from the subway train at Cortlandt Street and made his way through the bustling crowd on Broadway to the ancient building which housed the offices of Ludlow Brothers, members of the New York Stock Exchange.

The young man at the window of the cage stared inquiringly over a large fortune of securities which he was rapidly counting, entering in a book, and labeling with small pieces of paper pinned to each bundle with a T-headed pin.

"I want to speak to Mr. Ludlow," Chick said.

The young man tossed \$20,000 worth of bonds ten feet down the desk to a fellow worker and said, "There're two of them."

It was a moment before Chick realized the youth was addressing him. "Two of what?"

"Two Mr. Ludlows." The young man grinned. "C. B. and A. B. Take your choice. C. B.'s stocks, and A. B.'s bonds and commodities."

"I'll take the stocks, if you don't mind," Chick said.

"You'll lose, either way," the young man informed him and pushed a button. An office boy appeared and at the young man's laconic "C. B." said, "Come along, mister."

Chick followed, with a definite impression that the custodian of the stocks and bonds in the cage was not much worried whether Ludlow Brothers got business or not.

C. B. was a very small, nervous man, with ticker tapes running through his veins. He occupied an office twice too big for him, when he should have been under a glass bowl. His money-minded judgment re-

sponded favorably to Chick's clothes and general appearance. He took another look at the card in his hand and said, "Sit down, Mr. Hartshorn. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Chick took a red leather chair edged with brass tacks and waited a moment to see if Mr. Ludlow would go on. He had a distinct feeling that the broker's greeting was not one which would be given to a stranger, although there was no real foundation for his conclusion. He might easily be mistaken about the overzealous glint in C. B.'s hard eyes.

The broker watched him interrogatively, decided Chick was not going to speak, and pushed a box of cigars across the desk. Chick, who disliked cigars intensely, took one, and made a ritual of lighting it to gain time. The luxurious office was pervaded with an air of dire inaction, such as might hang over the scene of a duel when each adversary waited for the other to make the first move.

"Things look better, don't they?" C. B. opened with a stock remark which experience had proved delightfully noncommittal, and sometimes stimulative to business.

It ran into a dead end with Chick, who agreed quickly and unconditionally. "Yes, they certainly look better."

C. B., who, at heart, disliked inaction, whether it was in the market or himself, came to an important decision—that it could do no immeasurable harm to ascertain the real cause for Mr. Charles Hartshorn's visit. It pained him to think that Mr. Hartshorn might be in the office of Ludlow Brothers for the purpose of crying over spilt milk, but C. B. was a busy man. If

that was Mr. Hartshorn's purpose, the sooner he allowed him to cry it out and leave, the sooner he, C. B., could return to more profitable lines of endeavor.

"Personally," said C. B., "I would consider the coming six months a much more propitious time to trade than the past half year. Unpredictable market fluctuations have unfortunately caused unforeseen losses to many of our largest operators."

"So I've heard," Chick said shortly.

"Ha ha!" C. B. glanced obliquely at Chick and favored him with a business laugh. "It's the men like you, Mr. Hartshorn—men who can take it without squirming—who have helped restore the country to the financial responsibility it enjoys today."

"That's right," said Chick. C. B. wished fervently that his visitor would cease looking like one of the lions in front of the Public Library. He plucked a fountain pen from an onyx holder on his desk and gave it an unneeded filling from the inkwell.

"I presume you came down to reopen your account. Frankly, we're glad to meet you in person, Mr. Hartshorn. While we have no real control over the wishes of our customers, sometimes if we know them personally we are able to put in a helpful word. The pulse of the market, you know—that's the thing."

"I might at that." Chick regarded the broker through a smoke wreath. "For the fun of it, I'd like to run over my last statement with you. Perhaps you can give me some hints where I went wrong."

"Certainly," C. B. agreed. At last his client was running true to form. A push button produced an impersonal young lady, who made a trip to get the statement, giving Broker Ludlow a chance to indirectly recom-

mend one or two favorite stocks. Chick, who had gone to the window to stare out on Broadway, was not much help, and C. B. was relieved when the statement was placed on his desk.

His cordiality became real as his quick mind untangled the intricacies of the yellow sheet. "Ah—ah—there was a short period, Mr. Hartshorn, when we had some slight difficulty getting in touch with you."

Chick turned from the window and bent over the broker's sheet, noting his name and address stamped at the top of the statement.

"That's right," he said. "I was probably out of town. Of course, you might have had better luck if you'd tried my apartment on Park Avenue, where I live."

C. B. looked up, mirroring commercial grief. "But the addresses of all our customers are checked most carefully, Mr. Hartshorn, before an account is opened, particularly one of this size."

"Yes, it's big enough. Quite a wallop to lose \$130,000 in a month."

"Er—yes," said Mr. Ludlow. "Quite a wallop. Of course, to a man of your standing—"

"It doesn't mean a thing," Chick put in. "Not a thing. You see, Mr. Ludlow, I didn't lose it. I'm Charles Hartshorn, all right, but I never had an office at the address on that statement—and furthermore, I never had an account with you in my life!"

Chapter Thirteen: SHEPHERD VS. POLICE

"HOEFLE'S CLEVER," said District Attorney Dearborn, "and I think he's back of this. Anyhow, I'm not taking any chances. My secretary took the phone call. I was

to be there tonight before the first floor show and bring Maclain with me. The inference was that if too many of us showed up, we'd learn nothing at all."

"I doubt if it makes any difference," Maclain declared. "If Hoefle's mixed up in it, he knows you're going to have the place watched while you're in there. If the mysterious information's coming from someone working in Hoefle's place, then Hoefle knows about it. However, it's one of those things we don't dare pass up. What's your plan?"

"You and I and Springer will drive down in your Packard and go in together. There's a small waiting room to the right of the entrance by the coatroom. Springer can wait in there."

"Inconspicuously?" Spud asked slyly.

Dearborn's gray eyes twinkled. "It will be less conspicuous than not having him along, and he'll be handy in case of trouble, although I'm not anticipating any."

"And the rest of us?" the inspector inquired. "What do we do?"

"Follow about ten minutes later. My big car's outside, and I'll give the necessary instructions to Swanson, my chauffeur. He'll park across Sheridan Square where you can keep an eye on the entrance."

"I knew there'd be some way of keeping me out of dinner and a floor show if there was an expense account involved," Spud said sadly. "What do we do—just sit there?"

"There's nothing to stop you coming inside," the D. A. told him. "but I have a job for Sergeant Archer and the inspector. The Hi-de-Ho has a backyard which connects with a house on West 10th Street, directly in back of the club. I want the sergeant to watch it and

tail anyone who comes out."

"If you're trying to bottle up that club, Mr. Dearborn, you'll find it's a rabbit warren," Inspector Davis announced. "Hoefle owns two houses on each side of it, and I'm sure they connect. What about my getting a few more men?"

The D. A. shook his head. "I'll leave it to you and the sergeant to do the best you can. I doubt if anyone is coming out that we'll find of interest. This whole business may be some sort of trick to throw a dead fish across the trail."

"Suppose you wait until we get downtown," Spud suggested, "and we look the place over for ourselves. I think, with Archer and Davis, I can bottle up any five houses in New York City."

"I agree with Spud," said Maclain. "Let them follow us and make their own plans." He reached for and held a finger on one of a long row of pearl buttons set in a frame to his left. The impassive Springer jumped noticeably, for close by his ear a voice spoke from the wall and said, "When you hear the signal, the time will be *nine*-thirty-two."

"This place gives me the jeepers," said Springer truculently and stood up.

Maclain smiled. "I'm sorry if I startled you, but since I can't see the time, I have to hear it—and the constant striking of a clock annoys me. I have a direct line into a loudspeaker in the telephone company's time bureau. Shall we go?" He stood up, and Dearborn followed suit.

"Give us about fifteen minutes, Spud," Maclain said.

Rena came in from the adjoining room carrying a light evening raincoat over her arm. "It's pouring,"

she said. "You'd better take this with you, Captain Maclain." Her tone toward Duncan Maclain was always most formal when others were present.

Schnucke, alert, with raised ears, circled the captain and came up on his left, sitting down close by his leg. He seized the guide on Schnucke's back, and followed her from the room. Rena accompanied the three men to the elevator.

Sergeant Archer scratched his round head as he watched the door close behind them. "Sometime that dog's going to speak to me—and I won't be half as surprised as I was to hear that voice coming out of the wall telling Maclain the time. Did you ever see anything like her, Inspector—circling around him as if she was walking on eggs, so that he couldn't possibly take a step and trip over her?"

"Training," said Spud. He was always delighted when anyone took notice of Schnucke's smooth performance of her duties. "It takes three to five months of the most intensive training in the world. The Seeing Eye teaches them to sit, stand, walk, turn right or left, or wait at attention, and they obey each command like a soldier."

"Well, I never realized what they could do until I saw him downtown this afternoon."

"Does he take her every place he goes?" the inspector asked.

"Does a nearsighted man forget his glasses?" Spud countered. "With Schnucke, Dunc's independent. With me leading him around, he's just another blind man, and she's trained to do as much as I can. She'll lead him around ditches, fences or excavations and never jump—but the marvelous part is that she knows when

to intelligently disobey. Dunc couldn't beat that dog into leading him into danger!"

"Well, by God, I'd hate to try doing anything to him with her around," the inspector declared. "I'll bet she'd tear me to pieces, or anybody else who'd try to touch him. It's a pretty good combination when you come to think of it—protection for him along with everything else, and in his business he needs it."

"Strangely enough," Spud declared emphatically, "that's where you're fifty miles off the track, Inspector. Schnucke just won't bite, and I doubt if anything any of you could do would make her bite. I've seized Dunc, wrestled with him and pushed him around all over the place—and mauled her about, too. I believe you could walk in here and beat Dunc to death, and she wouldn't attack you."

"It doesn't make sense," Davis declared. "She's a police dog, isn't she?"

"No." Spud walked to the desk, lighted a cigarette, and returned to his place on the divan. "Schnucke's a German shepherd bitch, trained by the Seeing Eye to lead her blind master efficiently and safely. When Dunc walks through the park with her, or down Fifth Avenue, she's patted on the head and called 'Nice doggie' by every kid and old lady within a mile of them. It's against every instinct that a German shepherd has to bite. Their breed has worked with men in the fields—tended sheep—for over two hundred years. Hundreds of them are now leading blind people in this country and abroad. There's never been a case on record of a Seeing Eye dog biting anyone."

"But I tell you, Spud," Davis said heatedly, "I know a police dog when I see one! When Enright was com-

missioner, the department had a lot of them, but they died off with some sort of an epidemic!"

"There're still a few left," the sergeant argued. "They use 'em out in Brooklyn. Go out and maul one of them about someday—if you think they won't bite!"

"Good Lord!" Spud got up from the divan and stood looking down at the two officers, his yellow eyes aglow. "I thought two members of the department would know the difference between a trained police dog and a German shepherd. Apparently the same lack of information exists even among people who use them. Some day I'm going to get so mad on this subject I'll bust a blood vessel." His voice raised in anger. "Why, there's one lousy chain of restaurants right here in New York that won't let Dunc in to eat a meal because they think Schnucke's going to take a bite out of one of the waitresses' legs! Let me put you straight, Inspector: There's no such dog as a police dog. Take a bulldog and train it for police work, and it's a police dog! Take a Doberman pinscher and train it for trailing and use it in the police department, and it's a police dog! Take a German shepherd—the gentlest, kindest, most intelligent dog in the world—and spend week after week in heartbreaking labor training it to obey every command and to bite—if you *can* train it to bite—and you have a police dog!"

"You've got to show me," said Davis.

"By God," said Spud, "I'm going to show you!"

He strode across the office to where the soundproof French doors opened onto the penthouse terrace and flung them wide. A breath of scorching air from the streets below drifted into the cooled apartment, carrying with it rain, distant thunder from the storm, and

a faint roar of the traffic. The two men sat immobile and watched him as he disappeared through the doors to be swallowed up in the darkness of the terrace.

Sergeant Archer, conscious of the outside heat creeping in, took a big handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his forehead. Halfway to returning it to his pocket, he stopped, holding the handkerchief motionless before him.

Standing framed by the door to the terrace was Spud Savage, and beside him, sitting down as he stopped, staring with unwavering gray eyes, was a German shepherd. Cold fingers touched the sergeant at the back of his neck and traveled down his spine.

The dog was but little larger than Schnucke, but there was menace in its every line. Almond-shaped eyes, broad strong jaws and forechest spelt runner and fighter. The set of the white teeth and the stance of the full, erect tail showed the courage and ability to battle to the death.

Spud's face was grim and stern, and his yellow eyes never left the animal beside him. He held his right arm out stiffly, the flat of his hand facing the floor. "Stand, Dreist, stand" He took three slow paces into the room and repeated the command, then added most unnecessarily, "This is Dreist, gentlemen—the best police dog in the world. You're perfectly safe if you stay quite still."

The sergeant and the inspector both gave Spud's words the courtesy of unqualified belief. The sergeant shivered slightly as his large handkerchief, still held in front of him, fluttered in the breeze, and Dreist's eyes moved for a split second from the inspector to him.

Still watching the dog, Spud walked to Maclain's desk and from the bottom drawer took out a broad flat muzzle which he slipped on over Dreist's head. He snapped a heavy leather leash onto the dog's collar and led him first to the inspector and then to the sergeant.

Dreist sniffed them both with grave unconcern. The stolid Archer saw that his handkerchief was trembling in his hand.

Holding tightly to the leash, Spud took a seat on the divan and said, "Lie down." The dog obediently dropped to the floor at Spud's feet without taking his gaze from the other two men.

"You wanted to be shown, Inspector," Spud said in low emphatic tones. "Then look at the dog at my feet. He's from the same stock as Schnucke, only she's trained to be safe as a little child—and Dreist's trained to be dangerous as a loaded gun. Months of it at Mt. Pelerin in Switzerland. He works only with me and Maclain, and both of us had weeks of special instruction with him in New Jersey under the best trainer in the world before he was released to our custody.

"His first duty is to protect us against assault—and never allow anything to come between him and either of us without our instructions. He'll stand, lie or sit down instantly, at command, and stay there for hours while we're away. He's been taught to bite—but not to tear—and his trailing ability is developed as high as possible, though he's not by any means among the best.

"He can jump an obstacle eight feet high, and clear ten to twelve feet in width. He'll carry and fetch over obstacles, or through fire and water, and can find something by nose work which has been thrown away

hours before." Spud's eyes fixed the inspector. "But most difficult of all, Inspector, was to teach this dog to bite! It took weeks of play with a gunny sack—then a sack-covered pad on the arm of a man. Time and time again it had to be gone through—for Dreist, Inspector, is a German shepherd, despite the fact that he's a police dog, and while he'll bite now, he's doing something that every instinct in him cries out against doing! It was the very fact that Schnucke was no protection which forced us to get him."

"And now that you've got him," Davis asked rather hoarsely, "what are you going to do with him?"

"I promised the D. A.," said Spud, "that I'd keep an eye on Hoefle's place. I'm taking Dreist along to help."

"If you keep that muzzle on him," said Archer with a deep sigh. "I'll go along in the front seat—you and the inspector and the dog can ride in the back!"

Chapter Fourteen: THE MARIHUANA VOICE

DEARBORN'S chauffeur, Swanson, proved to be a stocky Swede, possessed of a single joy—to get the big limousine he so efficiently handled from one part of New York to another with a minimum of elapsed time.

New York was in one of its habitual summer moods where for days at a time thunderstorms mingled with the heat, producing only additional mugginess without compensating coolness.

Sergeant Archer held true to his promise and sat up front with Swanson, leaving the commodious back seat to Spud, Dreist and Davis. As they flashed downtown toward the Village on the elevated Miller highway,

Spud gazed through the thick rain at the electric signs and the lights of Weehawken showing blurred across the river. The occupants of the car were silent except for Dreist, sitting on the floor between Spud's legs. Occasionally he growled defiance at a particularly vivid streak of lightning or a too-prolonged roll of thunder.

Spud had donned a lightweight waterproof over his evening clothes before leaving and had dug up slickers for Davis and Archer, who were unprepared. The rain had slacked somewhat when he and the sergeant left the car on West 10th Street and instructed Swanson to drive the inspector around to Sheridan Square where he could park opposite the canopied entrance.

Spud's evening clothes and the powerful dog by his side made him a noticeable figure. Sergeant Archer drew him back into the shadow as they watched the limousine roll away.

"Which house?" Spud asked.

"Two doors down." The sergeant pointed to a weather-beaten brownstone which had once been a fine residence. Its windows and front door were boarded up.

"If you can get me through to the yard in back, I'll cover it with Dreist. You can watch the front."

"I can get you any place in New York," said Archer. "Come on." He walked several doors down the street to where a light shone yellowly from a basement window. Inside, visible through the two words *On Wong* lettered on the window, an impassive Chinese was ironing shirts.

The sergeant led the way into the area and unceremoniously pushed open the door to the small laundry. Spud and Dreist followed. The Chinese held

the iron poised a safe distance from a shirt. Apparently oblivious to Spud and Dreist, he asked in unaccented English, "Trouble, Sergeant?"

"No more than usual. I want to get this man and the dog through to the back."

"Go ahead," said On Wong. He returned to his ironing, no more interested than if men in evening clothes leading police dogs passed through his shop in a steady procession all day long.

Spud silently followed the sergeant through a dark room, which looked like a kitchen and smelled like soap, into a narrow hallway where bedbug extermiator offended his nose, and down two steps to a dusty glass-paneled door which barred the way. The sergeant drew a bolt and led them out into a weedy yard with a low iron fence to the right and a high wooden one in the back and on the left.

Light shone from the second floor window of the opposite house, dimly illuminating the yard. The door they had just opened squeaked badly. A girl, clad only in brassière and silk shorts, appeared at the window and looked out. Apparently she could not see them where they stood. She was still for a moment, with her back to the light in the room; then she held a hand out the window, felt the rain, and withdrew to lower the shade. Her figure showed black against it.

"Not bad," Archer muttered rather sadly, then added, "You'll have to climb three of those iron fences between here and the yard you want, and then you won't be in it. You'll be separated from it by a board fence, like the one on our left. I wouldn't try to climb it in that soup-and-fish!"

"What good's it going to do to stay on this side?"

"There's a shed in the back of the house. There used to be boxes under it. I guess they're still there. You can get one and take a look over the wall if you want to, but if anybody tries to take it on the lam, they've either got to climb a fence by you or go out through the house I'm watching in front. My advice is to sit under the shed and listen. You got a gun?"

"No," said Spud. "I've got a dog."

Willie Weiser, the glorified interne of music, in a \$200 uniform of shimmering white silk, stepped to the edge of the stage and condescended to show opalescent teeth in a pleased smile. The joint was jammed. Willie appreciated better than anyone the pulling powers of his music. His agile white wrist raised to the proper angle to reveal his real pearl cuff links. His slender three-foot baton writhed like a horsewhip under the snap of his equally agile fingers.

Startled out of a natural lethargy, Willie Weiser's leather-lipped cornetist fused eight distinct half notes together and breath-blasted them through a trembling horn in a single wail.

At a special table, supposed to be private owing to the proximity of three potted palms, Duncan Mac-lain placed one hand over a sensitive ear and reserved the other hand to pat Schnucke's head so she would refrain from a natural desire to howl. He could not see the advent of the Twenty Village Terrors as they trooped onto the floor; nevertheless he had a lucid picture of the 20 yards of costume which clothed them as the lithe young bodies stamped in unison to Willie's own rendition of *Miss Otis Regrets*.

The hard-working dance instructor who trained

them would have listened unbelievably had Maclain told him that Terror Number 3 in the left line and Terror Number 5 in the right were off the beat of the music and dancing badly. Along with many others, he could not have known that the captain's enjoyment of dancing was harmonic rhythm beating pleasantly on the ears. A false note in footwork was as easily detectable to Maclain as a false note in music.

The Terrors parted and allowed passage for Miss Amy Arden. Without pause, the music switched. Miss Arden went into her song, but neither Maclain nor Dearborn heard her, for the D. A. was leaning across the table talking in a whisper. "It's a deliberate setup, Maclain; I can't figure it out. Everybody we mentioned in your office today is here!"

"A tip-off." Maclain turned his head in short jerks as though he were trying to locate those present. He felt about the table until his hand encountered a dish of crackers. His strong fingers crumbled one to a powder. "Where are they—and who are they?"

Dearborn's clear gray eyes searched the room, acting for the captain. "Hewitt and his wife are four tables down on this side of the floor."

"By themselves?"

"There's another couple with them—I'm sure he's the Gilbert Fox Spud spoke of."

"You have seen him before?"

"Once or twice. But I don't know the girl with him."

"How are they seated?"

"Hewitt's wife is facing us. She's been watching you, I'm sure. He has his back to us. Fox has his back to the dance floor, and the girl with him is facing it."

"Who else?"

"The firm of Trilby and Shane! They're in the opposite corner."

"Girls?"

"They always have girls. One of them I know—Mildred Mills. She beat a rap for bad checks, and she's been evidence for them in a couple of divorce suits. The other I don't know."

"Where're Eyelyn and Chick?"

"How did you know they were here?" There were occasions when Maclain's quickness startled Dearborn.

"You said everyone was here," Maclain answered impatiently. "Where are they sitting?"

"They're across the room from us—about a third of the way down from the stage. That clinches it, doesn't it?"

Maclain had taken several of the crackers from the dish and was arranging them in orderly designs on the table. "You know it took something more than amusement to get her here tonight, Claude—with Paul hardly out of the morgue. You were pretty smart to have this place covered. I'm afraid there's going to be trouble."

"Well, we've set the trap as well as I know how." A line showed along the D. A.'s jaw. "If I just had an inkling—"

Willie Weiser's music stopped, and a clatter of applause filled the room. The music broke out again, muted, and more sweetly. Amy Arden took up the song.

"You can't stop something when you don't know what you're trying to stop. Wait, Claude." Another cracker broke under Maclain's fingers. "Listen to that

girl!"

The D. A. obeyed for a few bars, politely wondering. "Not so good, is she? She's the one we're here to talk to."

"I know," said Maclain, "but her voice. Claude—there's your trouble!"

The D. A. watched Amy's white satin form with a quiet fascination. The spotlight was dazzling against the pleated sheen of her skirt, which was hardly whiter than her neck and arms and the smooth contour of her back revealed to the waist. Try as he might, he could detect nothing in her voice which might hint at calamity or even sorrow. He told as much to Maclain. "This waiting is getting us. I think we need a drink."

"I've just had one, Claude, but I'll join you in another. That doesn't mean that something's not off color in that girl's voice. Remember, I can't see the expressions of those around me. If I want to know how they feel, their voice is my only criterion! It's taken me years to learn the infallible signs of mirth and despair, energy and fatigue, pleasure and pain—even to differentiate a speaker's age."

"Maybe she's just tired—or worried at our being here."

"No, it's not that." Maclain's own voice showed he was searching back into the past. "If the thickness of speech in intoxication weren't so apparent, I'd say she'd been drinking."

There were tears in Amy Arden's voice as it trailed away into vociferous applause, but Maclain heard more than that. Clear as a black line was the place where the tears met and merged into underlying laughter. The juncture of the two was still there when she said,

"Thank you—thank you so much—all of you." The laughter was haunting him, along with the patter of her footsteps behind the stage.

Then a whirl sounded over the restaurant as electric fans went on for a brief space between Amy's song and the feature dance to follow. With the starting of the fans a warm breeze struck Maclain, carrying with it from the direction of Willie Weiser's orchestra the veriest hint of a sweet, strange smell.

Maclain's hand flattened down tight on the crackers. "She's not drunk," he told Dearborn. "She's been smoking marihuana!"

Chapter Fifteen: THE DANCE OF THE INFERNO

THE Twenty Terrors went through a routine number and were followed by a hard-soled hooper who imitated railroad trains. Willie Weiser's voice, pitched to pellucidity, foretold the oncoming of "Miss Cora Braithwaite—famous soprano—secured by the management at enormous expense!"

Miss Braithwaite could have shed 60 pounds without being too slender and was in a transient period of blondness. She thrust herself into the spotlight, perspiring freely under a shell of powder thick as coconut meat. Surprisingly enough, her appearance was forgotten when she began to sing, for her voice was accurate and pure and had real feeling behind it. She won her audience into three encores. It was in the middle of the second song that Amy Arden slipped into the vacant chair between Dearborn and Maclain.

"You're the district attorney, aren't you—and it's all right to talk to you, isn't it? I won't get fixed up—

mixed up—with this.” She had trouble with her words, checking them with strange little hitches of the breath, and straightening them out again into their proper sequence and meaning.

“I’m the D. A.,” said Dearborn. “If you’re afraid to talk to me and Captain Maclain, you certainly picked a bad place. Why didn’t you come to see me instead of asking us to come here?”

“I’m not talking for myself. I’ve got nothing to be afraid of. I’m trying to clear an innocent man.”

“Innocent of what?” asked Maclain.

“Murder.”

He could hardly hear Amy over Miss Braithwaite’s voice, but her respiration was clear enough—a series of hard, scratchy gasps, tumbling out, one over the other.

“I want to be seen. I promised I’d tell you—tell you—the truth.” Again she had to fight her words.

“Are you ill?” Maclain asked.

“No.” The single negative was frightened. “You think a man killed Paul Zarinka last night—he didn’t!”

“What man?” asked Dearborn.

“You know what man—you’ve tried to get him before. He never left this place all evening.”

“That means nothing to me.” Dearborn spoke, voice frigid. “Benny Hoefle’s paid for the death of others besides Zarinka.”

“I didn’t say Benny.”

“But you meant him.”

She gave a chill-provoking giggle. “Ask your own answers, Mr. Dee-Lay. You want to listen, or shall I go?”

“Go on, Miss Arden. We’re most anxious to hear

what you want to say." Maclain was reassuring and most friendly.

Amy's short gasping breaths grew longer. He had an idea that she might not reach the end of her talk without succumbing to the influence of the powerful drug. He knew that, after the primary exhilaration, too much marihuana induced sleep profound as death. Human resistance against it was fruitless. The girl's lengthening respiration warned him. "The man you want is here tonight. Hewitt's his name."

"Where is he sitting?" Maclain asked softly.

She pointed a hand, then said, "You're blind, aren't you? He's a tall dark man with a twisted nose." Her giggle was inane. "A twisted nose," she repeated. "He was here last night and he fought with his wife. He's terribly jealous."

"You know him well," Dearborn stated.

"I know him well." Again she giggled. "He paid me money to tell him about Zarinka and his wife. I called him last night and told him she was here."

"What time did he leave?" the D. A. asked her.

"About nine-thirty—it wasn't so long before the show began."

A waiter brought the drinks Dearborn had ordered.

"Can I have one?" Amy asked.

"By all means," said Maclain. "Take mine." A clink of ice and a swish of seltzer followed.

Miss Braithwaite was finishing her third number, climbing into the high scales along with the trilling flute. Over her voice Maclain caught the scratching flare of a match and the soft puff of Amy's lips as she lighted a cigarette.

"Nine-thirty he left—not long before the show. He's

the man who killed Zarinka."

"I'm afraid I need more than that, Miss Arden," said Dearborn.

Again Maclain's sense of smell told him that Amy Arden's cigarette contained more than tobacco.

"Give me a drag, will you?" he requested pleasantly and held out his hand. He knew a marihuana smoker, under the influence, will almost unconsciously obey a suggestion. Acting without volition, she placed her cigarette between his fingers. His left hand had already located the ash tray. He snubbed the acrid cigarette in the glass tray, reached for his case in his side pocket, and tendered it to the girl.

"Take one of these."

She did so, and again he heard the scratch and flare of a match, but, as he feared, the harm was already done. A single inhalation of marihuana is powerful in itself, and Amy had already had more than enough.

There was a fanfare from the orchestra "We now introduce," said the voice of Willie Weiser, "the feature which brings people from all over the world to this spot of gaiety and good food—a dance which has become famous from Rome, Italy, to Rome, New York—from Bayonne to Barcelona. For the high spot in our unequaled program, ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Señor Sebol and his charming partner, Señorita Sabolina, in that marvelous fantasy of their own invention—"The Dance of the Inferno!"

"Half-past nine he left," said Amy. "Half-past nine—to commit a murder—to murder a committee." Her voice was smothered in laughter which mixed with a rising flare from the orchestra on the stage. Cutting through the notes of the music, Maclain heard a gentle

thud. The girl's head had drooped slowly to the table. He reached out a hand and touched her soft hair.

Dearborn's voice was grave with concern. "She's passed out, Maclain. What the devil had we better do?"

Maclain's fingers found the girl's wrist and closed on her pulse. It was thin and wavery. "You'd better get a doctor, Claude," he suggested, "but do it quietly. She's highly drugged, but I don't think there's any danger—and she's as safe here at the table as any place else I'll stay here with her."

Dearborn signaled a near-by waiter and handed him a check. "Get my coat from the cloakroom," he ordered curtly.

The waiter paused for a moment, looking at Amy's head resting between her arms. "Miss Arden all right?" he asked without much solicitude.

"Certainly," said Dearborn. "Hurry with that coat. You want to make a scene?"

"Not me," said the waiter. He had seen many young heads, blond and brunette, in the same position before. He went on his errand, figuring it would end in the ladies' rest room and a taxi, as it always did.

"If there's a side door out," said Dearborn, "I'll bring the doctor in that way, and we can take her back to the dressing room if he thinks it's necessary."

"Will she be noticed here?"

"I don't think so. The lights are all down except for the spots on the dance floor, and you're pretty well shielded behind some palms. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Maclain released his hold from Amy's wrist, lighted a cigarette, and leaned back in his chair. The noise of the dancers' light skillful feet was almost inaudible

against the weird wind music which led them on.

If Amy Arden's story were true, the meshes about Howard Hewitt had grown strong, tightened to the point of strangulation, but stories which rang true had a pattern—they were systematically perfect—without an ugly protuberance to spoil their design. Once cut and polished, and their luster brought to light, they glowed with the beauty of a genuine stone, secure in its own value. Amy Arden's statement had no such life. Twist it and turn it as he would, Maclain could not free it from ragged edges and a backing of paste. The only thing which stood the test was Amy's hint that the triangular interview just terminated came at Hoeft's behest.

The rest of the affair was dressing—stage props to hide the ugliness behind the scene. Strong reasons had been disseminated with care to bring all the actors in a single drama to the Hi-de-Ho Club that night. For an hour since his arrival, his scalpel-sharp mind had probed and cut at the problem without result.

A waiter leaned close to Maclain, interrupting his thoughts "There's a telephone call for Mr Dearborn."

"He's stepped out," said Maclain. "Get the number, and I'll have him call."

The sound of the waiter's retreating feet grew fainter, and Maclain shifted uneasily in his chair. For once in his life he mistrusted his highly trained ears. He had heard the waiter approach and heard him leave, but someone was breathing close behind him. He strained to listen against the blare of the music and was certain he heard another set of footsteps move toward the front of the restaurant. For a split second he felt there was something stealthy and furtive in their

tread, then they merged into the patter of other feet on the dance floor and were lost.

The Twenty Terrors trooped in from behind the stage to add to the increasing cadence of the dance. Wilder and wilder the music grew. Brass blared it into a fantasy of the damned, urging the betailed Sebol after the half-naked Señorita in a speedy chase of lustfulness—which could only end in a disappointing crash of chords.

Maclain gave way to the sound and built his own pageant—enhancing the scene with infinitely more beauty and life than it really deserved. "The Dance of the Inferno!" The pity was that no person of the many present could ever see with their eyes the scene conjured up by Duncan Maclain.

To him the number of the Terrors increased with the tempo of the music. They flew off into space, transformed into millions of atomic female fiends. They became beautiful baby denizens of a bottomless pit; dancing in riotous seething shades of burning sulphur. Somehow they merged all together into a whirling ball of color.

The feet scampered away on the shrilled notes of a flute. Maclain sighed at the click of returned lights and the laughter and applause.

Close behind him, bringing him to himself completely, a voice said. "For heaven's sake, Dunc, I didn't know you were here! Who's the sleeping beauty?"

He recognized the voice as belonging to Charles Hartshorn.

From across the dance floor a woman screamed, harsh as crackling rocks: "He killed her, I tell you! He killed her! I saw him drive that knife in her back:

There he is—standing right there—talking to that blind man with the dog!”

Maclain reached out a hand and touched the face of the girl sprawled over the table. It was unresponsive as a mask of papier-mâché. Amy Arden was dead.

Chapter Sixteen: THE BOY IN THE YARD

SPUD climbed the intervening iron fences without much difficulty. They were of an old-fashioned type made of bent iron rods and were not over three feet high. He found the shed Archer had indicated and listened until the creak of the dusty back door announced Archer's departure through the laundry. He turned to his own duties, which were distasteful enough to keep him well occupied.

The inspector's remarks in Maclain's office had caused his quick impetuosity to force him into a grandstand play with Dreist. He grinned into the darkness at the thought of their frozen expressions when he stepped in from the terrace. He was, however, glad to have the capable dog along. Prowling around strange backyards at night was not to his liking and apt to be serious should some honest householder mistake him for a marauder.

Two more windows in a near-by house showed radiant as somebody within turned on the lights preparing for bed. Spud was grateful for the dim illumination afforded to the yard. The house with the sloping roof in back which formed a shed received enough of it to prove the yard dirty and uncared for.

He slipped the leash from Dreist's collar but left the broad muzzle with the hard tip in place. The

boxes were up against the house under the sloping roof as Archer had stated. Dreist kept close to his right leg as he moved about in the semidarkness. Police dogs usually work from the left, but Dreist, especially trained for Maclain, was an exception. The captain was helpless without Schnucke's guidance, and her position was always on the left, so it was necessary to have a police dog which would work from the right on the rare occasions when Maclain wanted to use both dogs together.

A light rain sounded noisily on the top of the make-shift shelter. Spud secured one of the boxes, stood it on end beside the seven-foot wood fence, and looked over. The adjoining yard obviously formed the back of the Hi-de-Ho Club. An attempt had been made at one time to convert it into an outside eating place—unsuccessfully, he judged, from the battered appearance of the four yellow tables standing bleakly in the rain.

Dreist, standing beside the box, looked up inquiringly. Spud signaled with outstretched hand to stand. The dog, like all well-trained police dogs, unhesitatingly obeyed commands by word or gesture. Many desperate criminals had learned to their sorrow that there was one command not necessary for the master to give—the command to attack. Such a command was readily conveyed to the dogs by the threatening actions of an aggressor; an upraised arm, a clenched fist, the sight of a gun, or a motion to get one, or any molestation of his master formed an instant and emphatic command for a police dog to fly into action.

Spud stepped down from the box and went back under the shed. His look over the wall told him why Archer was so sure the shed formed an efficient point

of vantage. The backyard of the Hi-de-Ho Club was hemmed in on the side opposite the board fence by the blank wall of a five-story building. Anyone desiring to exit from the club from the rear must either scale the high fence he and Dreist were guarding or climb a low iron fence similar to the two they had just crossed. Such a maneuver would give access from the club to the rear of the boarded-up house fronting on West 10th Street, but, with Archer guarding its front door, the house would prove nothing more than a trap.

Minutes dragged wearily along as the windows of surrounding houses winked on and off. Spud settled himself comfortably as possible on an up-ended box and wished he had the patience of Dreist, resting complacently at his feet. Once the back door of the Hi-de-Ho Club was opened, emitting a clatter of dishes and the faint strains of Weise's orchestra.

Dreist stood up, noiselessly alert, and Spud made another trip out into the rain to peek cautiously over the fence. The surrounding window lights had grown dimmer. He peered through the darkness, but could see nothing except the four silent garden tables. He returned to his place under the shed, muttering soft curses. Another half-hour slipped by. He was beginning to fidget on the uncomfortable box top and wonder about Archer's delay in coming back to release him when Dreist stood up again.

The dog made no sound. Spud slipped one hand under his throat close to the collar and felt the ripple of muscles caused by a suppressed growl. There was no mistaking the signal. Dreist's ears and nose, far keener than any human's, had detected the presence

of someone close by.

Spud sat quietly, his eyes fixed on the top of the board fence, then suppressed a grin. A yellow cat had appeared on the fence top with a wraithlike quietude. Spud leaned forward, staring more intently, and saw he was mistaken.

The glint of yellow he thought was a cat was, in reality, the back of a hatless human head, combed sleek and smooth. It turned as Spud watched, and a glint of light touched the handsome face of a boy.

Steadily the head rose higher, followed by arms and shoulders. A second later, with oily fluidity, the boy was over the fence and standing not 15 feet away. He wore a light belted raincoat, and for a moment he stood close to the fence smoothing the rumpled garment into place after his climb. Then, without a glance in Spud's direction, he started across the yard.

"Where you going?" Spud asked pleasantly, out of the darkness.

The question electrified the boy's figure into startled action. He spun a half turn on his toes and a hand darted in beneath his raincoat quick as the strike of a snake. The movement brought his face into the light, and Spud could see the round-eyed expression of incredulous surprise, but before he could speak, the boy whirled again, lifted up his impeding raincoat, and took the first three-foot iron fence with a clean running jump. "Stop!" Spud yelled sternly. "I'll put a police dog on you!"

The youth never faltered in his stride but cleared the second fence. The basement door where Spud had entered the yard was not more than 20 feet ahead of him. Spud took his hand from Dreist's throat and

said, "Get him."

The dog left like a gray shadow flying through the night, cleared the first fence with a ten-foot jump and was three feet behind the running figure when he went over the second.

"You'd better stop," Spud yelled, but he was too late. Dreist hurtled himself sideways at the back of the flying legs. Football players call it "clipping"—the surest, and most dangerous, form of stopping a runner—so dangerous that the rules have barred it completely.

The fleeing youth never had a chance. He turned a complete somersault and landed with a crash. Before he could make an attempt to rise, Dreist was standing over him, growling fiercely.

"Stay where you are—and don't move!" Spud yelled a warning as he vaulted the first fence. The youth had no intention of defying the bristling menace which looked the size of a lion in the dimness of the yard.

The basement door burst open before Spud got over the second fence, and Spud yelled, "Stand, Dreist!" as he recognized the bulky form of Sergeant Archer.

"Come on," the sergeant yelled. "There's hell to pay in the Hi-de-Ho!" He stopped short, almost stumbling over the supine form, and drew back hastily from the growling Dreist.

"Stand!" Spud yelled again, as he came up. He snapped the leash on Dreist's collar. The sergeant leaned over and struck a match.

"What the hell!" he said.

Round eyes, frightened and filmy, stared up into his.

"Madonna!" said the sergeant grimly. "Now ain't that just too bad!"

Reinforcements had already arrived from the precinct station when Spud and the sergeant reached the canopied entrance to the Hi-de-Ho with their crest-fallen captive between them. The sergeant had lost no time in frisking the slender youth and was greatly surprised to find him unarmed.

"I'm certain I saw him reach for a gun," Spud said, as they walked around the block.

"You probably did," the sergeant agreed. "His breed do it out of habit, whether they have one or not. Ain't that right, Madonna—or did you have one and throw it away in the yard?" Madonna remained gloomily silent, and the sergeant continued, "Never mind—we'll find it if it's out there."

Two patrolmen, who were holding back the inevitable crowd already gathered about the entrance, passed them inside, with a glance of inquiry at Spud's evening clothes and the disdainful Dreist.

"What's going on?" one of the patrolmen asked Archer. "There's another dog inside there now."

"It's a dog show," the sergeant told him. "Look out you don't get bit."

Chapter Seventeen: TABLES AND CRACKERS

THE clinical simplicity of Benny Hoefle's private office on the second floor of the Hi-de-Ho Club bespoke the \$10,000 spent on its furnishings; \$2500 of the \$10,000 had gone into the black-topped, modernistic desk which decorated one end of the office. Back of it sat Duncan Maclain, a courtesy accorded him by Inspector Davis. At his right sat District Attorney Dearborn, his face strained into the pastiness of underdone piecrust.

The inspector, phlegmatic even when homicide broke under his nose, was at Maclain's left, forming the third member of a grim tribunal.

The inspector was losing no time. The stories of witnesses changed with the rapidity of scurrying snowflakes, and altered at each casual contact with a gossiping tongue. He finally had a murder he could tie up in a box and present to the D. A., intact and without apology. There were 200 or more people downstairs: 50 of them at least were ready to send Charles Hartshorn to the chair with their pointing fingers.

Davis reassured himself by glancing at the two police stenographers, ready at a small desk close by. Deliberately his gaze circled the room, pausing briefly at Spud and Sergeant Archer on a leather-backed couch, Dreist at their feet; traveling thence to the neatly uniformed figure of Lieutenant Healy from the precinct station, and finally stopping with apparent friendliness on the rigid face of Charles Hartshorn.

Chick was seated in a straight-backed armchair: a few feet in front of the desk, facing Maclain. His hands were in his lap before him. As he felt the brunt of Davis's look, his fingers clasped together in unconscious nervous energy, then freed themselves slowly—as surgical tape is removed from a tender wound.

"I can't understand why you killed her." The inspector's voice closed the matter once and for all.

"I didn't. I tell you I didn't." Chick spoke so flatly he hardly seemed to be protesting.

"Did you love her?" asked Dearborn.

"I'm engaged to Miss Zarinka. I never saw the girl who was killed before tonight."

"Why did you go to the table?" Davis began to bark

his questions.

"To speak to Dunc—to Captain Maclain."

"You knew he was in the restaurant earlier in the evening—why didn't you go then?"

"I didn't know he was there—he was back of some palms."

"Then how did you see him?"

"Evelyn saw him. She said I should go speak to him."

"And you thought you could kill that girl before the lights came up. Maclain's blind—he couldn't see you. That's it, isn't it?"

"That's a lie." Chick was cold and steady. "Why should I kill a girl I've never seen?"

"You admit you killed her, then?" Dearborn snapped.

"You can twist things any way you want to," Chick flared at him. "I didn't kill her."

"You just asked *why* you killed her," said Davis. "I'll tell you why: She knew you blew up Zarinka!"

Chick put one hand to his head. "You're mad!—insane! He was Evelyn's brother!"

"You lost \$130,000 of his in Wall Street—or more! How did you find out this girl knew it?"

"She didn't know it—because it's not so."

"Then why did you phone all these people to come here tonight?"

"I phoned no one."

"Not even Miss Zarinka?" Dearborn suggested.

Chick whitened. "Yes, I phoned Miss Zarinka. I found a message at my apartment that she should be here to learn something about her brother."

"Who sent it?" Davis asked.

"I don't know," Chick admitted. "I don't know. I

suppose it was the same person who phoned the rest of the people."

"How do you know anybody phoned them?"

"You just said so."

"That's a lie," said Davis. "I didn't say so. I said you phoned them—and you promptly lied to me about that."

Chick's eyes, bloodshot and haggard, fixed themselves on Maclain's impassive face and traveled down to the captain's fingers. Maclain had come upstairs carrying a dish of crackers from the restaurant table. One by one, he had laid them out in two parallel lines, surprisingly straight for a man who could not see what he was doing.

At the sight of the crackers Chick lost control entirely and shouted, "God Almighty, Dunc, can't you *say* anything--can't you *do* anything! Don't you hear them? They're tearing me to pieces!"

The room was silent except for a swish of paper as the two police stenographers simultaneously turned their notebook pages.

"I'm afraid I can't interfere, Chick," Maclain said sadly. "The inspector has allowed me to be here on sufferance. There's nothing I can do without his permission."

Davis leaned back in his chair and grinned at the D. A.

"I don't know what anybody could do, do you, Mr. Dearborn--when you have a restaurant full of eyewitnesses to a murder? I'd be glad to hear from Captain Maclain. What about you?"

"Go ahead, Maclain. If you can get a man out of a jam like that, you're a wizard! Of course, anything

you bring out may be used against Hartshorn when this comes to trial."

Maclain's expressive lips crinkled at the corners, but so swiftly that it passed unnoticed. "You hear that, Chick. It makes it mighty precarious for me to speak. Would you prefer that I kept silent?"

"I'd prefer you do anything. God knows, you can only do me good!"

"I'm glad you feel that way." Maclain turned his head to address the inspector. "I'm sure, Inspector, that you haven't told us all you know. I hardly think it's necessary. With so many creditable witnesses, anything you might say would be redundant to an extreme. But there are a few interesting points."

He made an almost imperceptible motion with his hand, and Spud approached the desk, leading Dreist. "If you don't mind, Inspector," Maclain continued, "where was the witness sitting who announced the murder by her screams?"

"Almost directly across the room from you—only one table farther away from the stage."

"Shall I mark it?" Spud asked.

"If you please," said Maclain.

Spud picked one of the crackers from the desk and broke off a corner, then laid it back carefully in place. The D. A. leaned forward to get a better view. He counted the crackers. There were two rows of nine each. "Are you sure that's the right number of tables, Maclain?"

"The right number bordering the dance floor—and they're the ones I'm interested in. There're two additional rows, though, on each side of the room—eight in the second row from the dance floor, and seven in

the third."

"Who told you that?" Davis asked.

"Schnucke, and my own senses. To reach our table, I walked the length of the room from the front door between the first two rows bordering the floor. It's Schnucke's business to keep me away from tables, so I counted those to my right and left as I passed.

"A few minutes later I excused myself and told Claude I was going to the washroom. That time I took a different route—you see, I like to know what sort of a place I'm in—and by the time I returned to the table, I had pretty well fixed the size of the restaurant and the number and location of the tables it contained."

"You touched every table?" Sergeant Archer put in.

"Certainly not, Sergeant. I'd hardly go around a restaurant groping at the diners—but every time I come close to a table, Schnucke signals me. I'm afraid we're getting away from the subject—I was about to ask the inspector where Howard Hewitt and his party were seated."

"They were—"

"Wait, if you don't mind, Claude." Maclain's interruption held a tone of command which effectively stopped the D. A. "I said I was about to ask the *inspector*."

Davis mentally counted the crackers before he replied. "You want a cracker marked to indicate their table?"

Maclain nodded.

"Let Spud mark it."

The inspector indicated one with his finger. Spud broke a small piece out of each of the four sides and set it back in place.

"You're sure of your facts, I know." Maclain felt the cracker and adjusted it to a slightly different angle. "I mean you have plenty of witnesses ready to corroborate everything?"

"I have more than that," Davis said calmly. "By tomorrow I can furnish you with photographs to scale of the entire place and measurements—to back up my witnesses."

"That's very wise," said Maclain, "but you and Claude really should get together at the start. You're one table off, now."

"What do you mean?" Dearborn demanded shortly.

"You, above all people, should know, Claude. It was you who told me Hewitt and his wife were four tables down from where we were sitting. Did you count our table as one?"

"Certainly not. I started at the next table—Hewitt's party was seated at the fourth!"

"Or, counting ours," said Maclain, "five tables away."

"That's right," Dearborn declared emphatically, "and that's the way your markers there show it."

"Then I have an extremely clear picture of the situation, except for one thing—I don't know who's right, you or the inspector."

"We both agree," said Davis.

"That's extraordinary," declared Maclain. "You see, Inspector, you pointed out the fifth cracker to Spud. I've been told that my hands are extremely quick—somehow or other, while Spud was breaking off the pieces, I moved one of the crackers down. The table you indicated to Spud, Inspector, was five tables away from where I was sitting—not four! Am I right,

Spud?"

"Sure." Spud grinned. "I know your tricks and was watching your hands."

"Well, anybody's liable to make a mistake like that." The inspector was ruffled.

"That's it exactly," said Maclain. "Anybody. I don't even believe two hundred people if they say they saw with their own eyes! Most people can't see with their own eyes—and, added to that, I don't think Chick killed that girl! Suppose we talk to the lady with the raucous voice."

Chapter Eighteen: EYEWITNESS

CHICK's face was brighter, his eyes clearer, as he left the room in the custody of Lieutenant Healy.

Evelyn was waiting for him in the anteroom adjoining Hoefle's office. Chick's arrest, added to Paul's death, for a time had killed her ability to think, paralyzed her mind with the surety of a powerful anesthetic. Only the smells of iodoform and ether were needed to give the hallucination that she was passing through the nightmare of a serious operation. Oblivious to the others in the anteroom—watching her with mingled gazes of suspicion and hostility—she started to her feet when Chick and the lieutenant appeared.

She was pale as she walked toward him, externally calm, and loyally disbelieving. The months she had spent in Chick's company had taught her that he was tender and considerate. Her love for him had developed slowly from a comfortable security in his company to a warm inner glow at his presence.

Strangely enough, the rending turmoil of emotion

through which she had passed during 60 long minutes had fused her desire for him with the quick white heat of an electric retort. The tragedy of Paul's death suddenly became shadowy. Her affection for her brother had been strong, but never tearing as she was torn with the thought that circumstances might take Chick away. She was ready to lie for him, perjure herself in every court—despite the stories of all those about her.

Stark and terrible, the moment kept coming back to her when the lights came up in the restaurant downstairs. Again and again she shut out the flash of Chick bending over Amy Arden, taking his hand away, bloody and stained, from the protruding hilt of the slim deadly knife.

She felt that she was partly to blame and mentally reiterated accusing questions. *Why, didn't I watch him every minute after he left our table? Why did I switch my glance to Duncan Maclain and the dog beside him? I know Chick d dn't kill her! He had no reason to kill her! Must I go through life tortured with the thought that I saw him plunge a dagger into a helpless girl?*

She dammed the futile, unanswerable stream as she approached him and forced a smile. "What news, Chick?"

"Maclain's on our side."

"Oh, I'm glad" She started to take his arm, but Lieutenant Healy interfered.

"I'm sorry, Miss Zarinka, Orders. I can't allow Mr. Hartshorn to talk to anyone yet."

"Where are you taking him?"

"Just downstairs." Healy said sympathetically. "He'll be here some time yet. You can see him later."

A uniformed man at the door moved to let them pass.

"They want to talk to Miss Kellogg," Healy said. "Send her in."

A slender, immaculately gowned woman in her late 20's rose at the sound of her name. The man beside her, sandy-haired and worried-looking, stood up, too.

"Are you Miss Kellogg?" the officer asked, looking at the man.

"I'm Mr. Bender—Louis Bender. I'm an attorney, and Miss Kellogg's here with me."

"Well, you'll have to get along without her for a while," the officer told him meaningly. "She's going inside by herself."

Mr. Bender started to protest about legal rights but subsided back into his seat when the girl said, "Shut up, Louie."

Spud watched her admiringly as she came in the room, but his admiration was not entirely unmixed with qualms. Spud knew a dangerous witness when he saw one. Miss Patricia Kellogg had all the attributes necessary to swing a jury. Dearborn saw it, too, and settled back with a satisfied smile of welcome. Miss Kellogg's forehead showed high over wide steady eyes and was crowned with artistically coiffured reddish hair. She wore, along with her late model dress, an air of befitting importance, which Spud did not like. He had seen it in witnesses many times before—witnesses who had their stories pat and unshakable. He knew Maclain faced a gigantic task to find a rift in Miss Kellogg's impregnable wall of self-assurance.

The girl surveyed the occupants of the room and calmly, without invitation, took the chair which Chick

had occupied a few minutes before. Dearborn, skillfully and with a minimum of questions, brought out Miss Kellogg's story for the waiting notebooks. Spud grew gloomier at each line as the police stenographers imperturbably recorded it.

He and the captain had faced many irritating problems together. Never before had they faced one which engendered in the optimistic Spud so much doubt. Personally he agreed with Maclain—that Hartshorn was not guilty, but he liked a run for his money. A roomful of panting witnesses, eager to prove their keenness, loomed insurmountable at first sight.

Miss Patricia Kellogg led off the pack in full cry. Her age came out as 28; her occupation as a designer of clothes for a large department store. She had never seen Charles Hartshorn before in her life—but was ready to pick him out of a hundred men if called upon to do so. "You see," she said, sounding almost sprightly, "it's hard to forget a man when you've watched him stab a woman in cold blood."

"You might repeat your story again, for Captain Maclain," the D A suggested. Miss Kellogg gladly complied, although her glance at Maclain indicated a secret sorrow at his obtuseness. It was the fourth time she had gone over it, and the repetition was becoming a trifle boring—particularly when it had to be done for a man who could not see the fine play of emotions which Miss Kellogg knew must enliven her features.

"They were seated a few tables away from me. I'd been watching them during the evening—the girl's attractive, and looked worried."

Maclain raised his hand and interrupted with a smile. "I'll have to ask you to be very specific, Miss

Kellogg. I'm blind, as you know, and while Mr. Dearborn is taking notes on everything you say, I find it necessary to keep track in my own way. I hope you'll understand."

"I'm afraid I don't," she said a little acidly. She was uncomfortable, with a feeling that Maclain was staring at her. Once conscious of them, the crackers annoyed her, too. She turned away from them and fixed her gaze on the inspector, who was toying with a watch fob and gazing at the ceiling.

"I'll try to make myself clear. Instead of referring to 'They,' would you mind stating names? I presume you mean Mr. Hartshorn and Miss Zarinka—but I'm not sure what you mean by 'a few tables away.'"

Miss Kellogg collected herself and thought.

"Five, wasn't it?" Davis remarked, abstractedly.

"If Miss Kellogg needs prompting, Inspector," Maclain exclaimed tartly, "I think we can dispense with her story entirely."

"Sorry!" The inspector sat up and added, "I was thinking out loud."

The captain's remark had its intended effect on Miss Kellogg.

"I don't need prompting from anyone! Mr. Hartshorn and the young lady with him—Miss Zarinka—were seated five tables away from me on the edge of the dance floor. The girl was worried—had been worried all evening."

"I see you're a keen observer. Not many people would notice the worried look of a stranger." Maclain spoke in a congratulatory manner. He snapped one of the crackers in two and placed it back in its proper order in the line. Her annoyance at the inter-

ruption was tempered by Maclain's word of praise for her observance.

"My attention was probably drawn to them—Mr. Hartshorn and Miss Zarinka—because they didn't dance. He—Mr. Hartshorn—left the table just before the 'Dance of the Inferno' was finished and started for where you were sitting."

"This way?" Maclain drew a finger between the two lines of crackers. "Surely he didn't cut across the dance floor while the show was going on?"

"I didn't say that," she flashed. "He walked down toward the other end of the dance floor and crossed there, then came up to your table on the opposite side."

"I see," said Maclain, "this way," and followed Chick's route, as she had described it, around the crackers. "And what then? Think carefully, please."

Miss Kellogg hesitated, conjuring up the vivid scene once again. "He walked around the table to where the girl was sitting—"

"Miss Arden?"

"Yes, Miss Arden!—to where Miss Arden was sitting—and leaned over her. I saw him reach into his pocket—"

"Which pocket?"

"I was about to say, his right-hand coat pocket. I saw him take something from it—then he turned his head toward where I was sitting, and before I could make a move or scream, he plunged that dagger into Miss Arden's back. The lights came on just then, and I yelled. I saw the blood on her—and on his hand as he took it away from the hilt of the knife!" Miss Kellogg stopped talking, breathing heavily.

"There're plenty of others," Dearborn said, unable

to conceal his triumph entirely.

"No doubt," Maclain agreed. "For the moment, I'd like to separate Miss Kellogg's acute powers of observation from her equally acute powers of divination."

"What do you mean?" She was suddenly keenly alert, accepting Maclain's challenge.

"The divination begins by you knowing Mr. Hartshorn was coming to my table when he started to walk in the opposite direction. You're very inclined to connect cause and effect, Miss Kellogg. You wouldn't want to swear that you knew Mr. Hartshorn was coming to my table, would you?"

"Oh, come now, Maclain," the D. A. put in. "Miss Kellogg's hardly on trial."

"The facts are on trial, Claude. You wouldn't like to have the grand jury bring back a No-Bill on this."

The D. A. grunted, and Spud grinned. "Go ahead," said Dearborn. "Ask her any damned thing you please."

Davis started to speak, then refrained and resumed his occupation of ceiling gazing and fob twisting.

"I was saying," Maclain continued, undisturbed, "that you wouldn't want to swear you knew where Mr. Hartshorn was going. Isn't it possible you might have lost sight of him at the end of the room and someone else might have approached my table?"

"I never lost sight of him for an instant!"

"Then the dance had finished before he reached my table?"

"No," she said, "it had not finished. I just told you that."

"That's what you thought." Maclain shook his head. "You never lost sight of Mr. Hartshorn's progress from

his table to mine for an instant—with twenty-two people cavorting about on the dance floor? It must have taken some footwork, Miss Kellogg, to dodge having any of them pass at any time between you and your view of Mr. Hartshorn!”

“That’s foolishness.” Some of Miss Kellogg’s aplomb left her in the heat of anger. “I saw the man—Mr. Hartshorn—go around the room to your table. We know he was at your table, don’t we? He was seized there, with blood on his hand!”

“What we’re trying to determine, Miss Kellogg, among other things, is how he got there. We’ve reached the point where he came around in back of my chair—another slight error on your part, if I may say so.”

“Do I have to stand for this?” Her question was addressed to the D. A.

“It may be good practice,” Dearborn advised. “I know a couple of lawyers who sometimes aren’t as polite as Captain Maclain.”

“I saw him, I tell you!” The crackers began to dance before her eyes.

“Undoubtedly you saw him, Miss Kellogg, but you didn’t see him pass in back of my chair.”

“My word’s as good as yours,” she said, “and better! You *couldn’t* see him pass in back of your chair!”

“I’m willing to leave that to the judgment of those who know me. I’m stating emphatically, Miss Kellogg, that you’re mistaken. Charles Hartshorn did not pass in back of my chair. He came around on the other side of the table, spoke to me, and was about to sit down in the vacant chair, with his back to you, when the lights came up. His story is that when they came

up, he saw the handle of the knife in the girl's back, and reached for it involuntarily—to pull it out, perhaps."

"I saw him take it from his pocket."

"You think you're telling the truth, Miss Kellogg. Hartshorn took a cigarette case from his pocket and took out a cigarette. He had it unlighted in his mouth when he was seized. In the brief moment he held it in his hand, the dance ended and the girls trooped from the stage between you and him.

"Whatever you may think, Miss Kellogg, your attention was diverted by those rapidly passing figures, and when the lights came up, you had a mental picture which you might have gotten from a broken reel. You saw Hartshorn's hand in his pocket. You saw it come out. You saw his hand on the hilt of a knife in the girl's back and saw it taken away—then, by your screams and quick talking, you printed the same picture in the minds of all those present."

Patricia Kellogg stood up and said defiantly, "I'm ready to swear to what I saw. It's the truth!"

Chapter Nineteen: SPLIT SECONDS—OF LIGHT

DUNCAN MACLAIN had an abnormal capacity for forfeiting sleep without appearing dullish on the following day. Doggedly determined not to miss a crumb of firsthand information, the inspector herded a line of frightened, irate guests through the office until the first gray of dawn. The procession left Maclain cool and physically unaffected. Spud's collar had melted down and merged with his tie, and Dearborn was nodding drowsily when the inspector finally said in-

cisively,

"That's the last of them."

Schnucke slept peacefully most of the night, but Dreist stirred restlessly at Spud's feet and watched the arrival and departure of each witness with unwavering eyes.

The rain had stopped when they left the club. They woke Cappel, who was fast asleep in Maclain's car, to drive them home. At the sight of Sheridan Square, blank, damp, gray, its stillness broken only by a moving truck, Spud's naturally buoyant spirits fell sharply. Stickily uncomfortable, he huddled in a corner of the car, too tired to push the warm body of Dreist off his feet.

"Go straight up Eighth Avenue," Maclain ordered Cappel as they started. "There's no traffic at this time of the morning."

He leaned back his head, and Spud thought he was asleep until he said softly,

"What a break!"

"It couldn't be worse, could it?" Spud was dripping gloom.

"Worse?" Maclain sat up straight, then said quickly, "I was thinking what a break it was for a murderer—to have Chick come and deliberately stick his hand in the jam pot."

"It looks pretty hopeless, Dunc." Spud was silent for the space of a block. "Separately, you tripped every witness you talked to—but no matter how clever an attorney Chick gets, I'm afraid a jury won't see it that way."

Maclain reached out and patted Spud on the arm. "It's the lowest hour of the morning, Spud, or you

wouldn't feel that way. We're up against a delightful example of mass suggestion. It's a powerful thing. Without it, there wouldn't be any professional magicians. Fortunately, its strength disintegrates when we break it down into its component parts!"

"I understand that all right, Dunc. It's Chick's attitude that worries me. Does he think he's shooting tiddledwinks? The last time he was questioned he admitted he deposited \$130,000 in Paul Zarinka's account shortly after nine yesterday morning. You heard him yourself! A man's got to come clean in a jam like he's in, Dunc. A mere story that he borrowed that from Paul won't wash! What's the matter with him?"

"More psychology," Maclain said wearily. "He's undergoing the great experience—he's in love."

"You mean to say—," Spud began disgustedly.

"Don't ever underrate it, Spud, just because your own veins are filled with tomato soup!" Maclain laughed softly. "I've seen you do some foolish things over Rena. at that. Before you jump off the deep end, take a look at Charles Hartshorn's background. Things which may look quixotic and foolish to you are the essence of decency to him."

"Don't mind my feelings," Spud protested in an injured tone. "Go right ahead and tell me I'm a rough-neck!"

"But such a delightful one, Spud—you never get my brain tied up in knots trying to figure out your obscure motivations. Chick's full of them—and it doesn't make things any easier. You'll find no temporization in the rigid code of Charles Hartshorn! Luckily for him I have known him long enough to recognize the

lavender smell of the Gay Nineties in certain corners of his mind. The question of money is taboo! Protection of feeble American womanhood is a task which no true gentleman renounces lightly! Above all," Maclain continued sadly, "the good name of the dead must be inviolate."

"I get it," Spud said after a moment. "He's protecting the memory of his sweetheart's skunk brother."

"You put it rather crudely, Spud," Maclain's lips crinkled at the corners, "but the facts remain the same."

"Even with the chair staring you in the face?"

"Yes," Maclain agreed, "even with the chair staring you in the face—if it's the honorable thing to do. I'm afraid it's going to cause us trouble."

"You and me both," said Spud. "And if I don't get a shower, and that damn Dreist doesn't get off my feet, I'm going to melt away."

"Well, you'll have to solidify by seven," said Maclain. "We've a busy day ahead."

When Spud came into the office after breakfast, he found the captain sitting on the floor. Maclain was bathed, shaved and immaculate in a light-gray suit. Beside him was a slotted section of the New York City map covering Sheridan Square and vicinity.

Maclain, dreamily running one finger up and down the streets under Schnucke's inquisitive nose, said, "I've already talked to Archer on the phone."

Spud grunted, lighted an after-breakfast cigarette, and sat down to wait for more.

"Your capture of Mr. Madonna was a dud."

"So he wouldn't talk." Spud blew out smoke, making a noise. "I was afraid of that."

"He talked, all right," said Maclain, "but said nothing. He came to the restaurant to meet a girl and go there just about the time the trouble broke. He ducked out the back door and climbed over the fence to get away. Archer says he's indignant because you put the dog on him."

"Maybe he'll bring suit," Spud suggested. "Are they holding him?"

"Not likely. Some shyster lawyer will be there with a writ by nine o'clock, and he'll be out by ten—if I know anything about it."

"You generally do." Spud watched the delicate touch of Maclain's finger tracing the streets. "What's on the cards?"

"This," said Maclain. "You're to meet Archer at the Hi-de-Ho at nine o'clock. From the front of the club I want you to walk to the 4th Street Station of the Independent Subway, take a train to 14th Street—the next stop—and walk back to the club. Hold a stop-watch on the time.

"Then, from the front of the club, go to the Christopher Street Station of the 7th Avenue I. R. T. Subway, take a train to 14th Street, get out and walk back to the club, and stop-watch the time. Then—from inside the club—go out the back way—climb over the back fence, run across two yards—"

"And fall in a heap—with a dog on me—and stop-watch the time?" Spud supplied.

"Good!" said Maclain. "You're keen this morning! While you're doing this, I want Archer to round up all the performers in the show—including Amy Arden's understudy and Willie Weiser's orchestra. He should be able to have them all together by twelve or

one o'clock. Run off the show and hold a stop watch on each act."

"They'll be pleased," said Spud.

"You can applaud them if you want to. I've made arrangements for Fred Schmidt, the electrician of the Metropolitan Opera House, to be there. He's going to make me a light chart."

"Sounds quite theatrical," said Spud. "What is it?"

"It's a series of floor plans of the restaurant showing the exact lights and their distribution during each number of the floor show. Along with those charts, I want the time in split seconds. For example, if a blue light comes on during a song, I want the exact number of seconds it stays on before it changes to another color."

"Is that all?"

"One thing more. Talk to Dr. Saraz first. Archer has his address. He lives two or three blocks from the club in a big apartment house on Christopher Street. If possible, get a written statement from him how long, in his opinion, Amy Arden had been dead when he arrived at the club."

"And stop-watch the distance," said Spud. "Can't you think up something for me to do in the Bronx? I simply adore walking around New York in the heat."

"Tomorrow, perhaps." Maclain smiled, stood up, and went to his desk. From the left-hand side he raised a Remington noiseless typewriter on a spring stand and deftly inserted a sheet of paper. "I'll write it out for you so you won't overlook anything."

"You'd better," Spud told him. "I might come home with a couple of dancers."

The captain typed nimbly by touch and with flaw-

less accuracy, for the blind are the most accurate typists in the world. They dare not make a mistake. Due to the difficulty of erasure, a single wrong letter invariably means they must retype an entire page. Maclain, while learning at the American Foundation for the Blind, had been taught infallible accuracy before essaying speed.

Spud read the instructions when they were finished, and looked up with a thoughtful frown.

"What about the lockers, Dunc? You didn't mention them before."

"Just what I said about them, Spud. That's what I want you to do. I want to know every subway station within ten or fifteen minutes' radius of the Hi-de-Ho Club that has lockers in it—the automatic kind, used by the public."

"I know what you're talking about, all right," Spud said impatiently. "Put in a dime, lock up your parcel, and the metal key's released to you so you can open the door when you come back. But what are you driving at?"

"This." Maclain folded his arms on the edge of the desk, and leaned across them tensely. "We have a definite starting point, Spud—let's take it. Davis, Dearborn and Archer are shooting at a barn door. I want to go around behind the barn and see what's there. They're so sure Chick knifed that girl that they've befogged the whole issue. Somebody present killed her—maybe a few seconds—maybe a few minutes before Chick came to the table. The chances are, that person had blood on his clothes. Suppose you'd planned a murder like that, Spud, and got blood on your clothes, what would you do? It would be foolish to hide them

in the club—the Homicide Squad took it to pieces last night, and they're repeating it again today. You couldn't arrange for a house or an apartment near by—that would be too dangerous. But suppose you had a car parked around the corner outside—and knew some other way out of the club besides the main entrance."

"The lockers!" Spud whistled softly. "That's a slick idea, Dunc. A man could drive there—already have a nickel in his pocket so he could get through the turnstile without going to the window for change, and have fresh clothes planted in one of the lockers. He could change in one of the public toilets. He could do that, too, Dunc. It's a long shot—and it's going to be a job for Archer to get all the used lockers opened—but it's worth trying!" Spud stood up and banged his fist into his palm. "By gosh, Dunc, who would be the most likely man in the world to walk in and out of that club without being noticed?"

"Benny Hoefle, and he's out of town."

"If you broke that alibi"—Spud's voice was trembling with eagerness—"by finding some of Hoefle's bloodstained clothes in one of those lockers, it would put you in the spotlight for fair!"

"When you get the light chart from Schmidt," Maclain told him, "I'm afraid you're going to find I was in a spotlight most of last evening—and didn't have sense enough to know it."

Chapter Twenty: ANALYSIS OF A WOMAN

A PLEASANT breeze was blowing from off the Hudson when Maclain started up Riverside Drive on his way to the Hotel Kingsley at 95th and West End. He cov-

ered the 23 blocks at a fast walk, leaving the drive for West End Avenue at 91st. As he crossed to the desk of the Kingsley a suave assistant manager started to bar his way with an admonition about dogs entering the hotel. Instead, when he saw the role of leader was reversed, he stepped to one side and nodded an "O. K." to the clerk behind the desk.

Maclain gave his name and asked for the Hewitts' apartment. While he was waiting for the phone call to go through, he took a Swiss repeater watch from his pocket and touched the chime button. The expensive timepiece sweetly tinkled the hour as 10:15—an atrocious hour. Maclain felt, to rouse a woman who had been up until 4:00 and undergone the trying ordeal of a murder in plain sight.

The clerk regretted, after a few moments, that Mrs. Hewitt was not yet dressed and asked to be excused. "Let me talk to her, please." Maclain held out a hand for the phone on the desk.

He received Gladys Hewitt's excuses and said, "I understand perfectly. Mrs. Hewitt, but you needn't worry about the early morning confusion of an apartment, since I can't see it. I came up because I felt I might be able to save you and your husband a lot of unnecessary bother."

She hesitated at the mention of her husband and finally said, not too graciously, "Very well, come up."

A new apartment was always an experience to Duncan Maclain, if not to Schnucke. He attained through the years a weird accuracy in judging the size of rooms by their resonance. A compendium of minute details swiftly gathered by touch and hearing gave Maclain a graphic picture of each dwelling place he entered—

a picture permanently filed away in his unusually capacious mind. Even while occupied with the usual inanities of polite greetings he judged the size of a room. His skillful, and usually unnoticed, touching of furniture, wallpaper and drapes, as he passed on his way to a chair, filled in the scene with a vivid brush.

By the time he was seated in Gladys Hewitt's living-room, lack of dust and orderliness of layout, added to her displeasure at having him find her disheveled, told him of her neatness. The feel of the Orientals under his feet and the touch of fine fabric under his fingers classified the Hewitts as well-to-do. Maclain knew the rentals in the Kingsley were not cheap. Apparently the Hewitts were not bluffing, since their furnishings harmonized with the location and price of their apartment.

He settled back in his chair and waited for the swish of cloth to announce she had seated herself.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked.

"Not at all." He heard her stir uneasily, but instead of beginning he leaned back in the chair, puffing contentedly.

"You wanted to talk to me?" she said after a painful length of time.

"Yes," said Maclain, and added, "Alone."

"Oh, I'm sorry." There was too much contriteness in her words. "I'd forgotten the maid was in the other room."

She rose and went to the door and said, "You can go now, Clara, and come back later."

Maclain waited until footsteps went down the hall and the front door clicked, and then refrained from telling Mrs. Hewitt that Clara's footsteps were mas-

culine to an extreme.

"Your story about the murder last night seemed to be clearer and more concise than any of the other witnesses, Mrs. Hewitt."

"Why not?" she said shortly. "I saw it all. I was facing you and saw him kill her. I was too paralyzed to scream—like the woman across the floor."

Maclain shook his head. "It's a terrible thing, Mrs. Hewitt. Charles Hartshorn is under arrest, as you know. It's bad for everyone involved, too, but I suppose it'll be over shortly, and the detectives downstairs in the lobby will be removed so that you can come and go as you please."

"What do you mean?" Her clipped question reached Maclain, dry and tight.

"I'm sorry if I've upset you. Really, I thought you knew. I had to get permission from Inspector Davis to come here to see you. You're being held as a material witness. It's possible that before the day's out you and your husband may have to post bond. Four or five others among the guests last night are already in jail. Your husband's connection with the city has undoubtedly earned you some official consideration."

"Consideration! Consideration!" Her tone rose, and she laughed harshly. "I've never had any consideration—from anyone! All my life I've been the scapegoat—like now. I tell the truth about what I saw, and you come up here to tell me I'm under arrest! Why should I be put under arrest—just because a man like Charles Hartshorn murders somebody?"

"Then you know Hartshorn very well?" Maclain was casual.

"I didn't know him at all—I never want to hear his

name again—getting me into a fix like this!”

“I guess I was mistaken, Mrs. Hewitt. I had an idea that you’d played bridge with Mr. Hartshorn and Miss Zarinka. Didn’t you?”

She left her seat and began to pace nervously back and forth. “I said I’d never mention that man’s name again.”

“You might as well tell me all of it.” Maclain was close to purring as he made the suggestion. “The man’s in jail now—charged with murder. Certainly the truth isn’t going to do him any harm. Why do you hate him so?”

“So you know I hate him?” She spoke with surprise, and viciousness, too, then moaned, “Oh, if I only knew the right thing to do. My head’s splitting!”

He listened as she went through another room to the bathroom. Running water and the clink of a medicine bottle followed. When she came back Maclain said, “I suffer from headaches, too.”

“They kill me,” she admitted, “and God knows, Howard does nothing to help them. That’s why I don’t dare tell the truth. I’ve never had any sympathy from my husband.”

“But surely he wouldn’t blame you for telling the truth.”

“He’d kill me,” she said soberly, “kill me in cold blood if he ever knew about Hartshorn.”

“And what about Zarinka?” asked Maclain. A curtain flapped behind him as a breeze from the river crossed West End Avenue and entered the room.

Gladys Hewitt began to sob openly. “He protected me—he was the only protection I had. Certainly Howard never protected me.”

"Protected you from Hartshorn?" The name came from the captain in a whisper of surprise.

"Yes," she admitted flutteringly, "from Charles Hartshorn. You're the only one who's ever understood."

He said, "Sit down here, beside me, why don't you—and tell me about it. Perhaps I can help."

He pushed her unresistingly to the floor beside him.

"It's too horrible—too awful." She leaned her head against his knee, and he felt she was shaking. "He was madly—passionately—in love with me, and I wasn't safe around him—wasn't safe right here in my own home! He killed Paul—because Paul knew I wasn't safe when Chick was around me. He killed that girl last night because she knew he killed Paul." She turned her head and began to weep copiously on Maclain's light summer trousers. He plucked a handkerchief from his pocket and held its absorbent bulk between the falling tears and the fabric of his suit.

"Well, he can't hurt you now, that's sure. He's in jail." He stood up and raised the weeping Gladys Hewitt to her feet. "Try to calm yourself, Mrs. Hewitt. Anything you've told me this morning will be held in the strictest confidence. I'd lie down and rest now. You've been through a terrible experience—it's apt to make you ill. I can't stand such things myself—they nauseate me."

"And me!" Suddenly she was laughing. "I'll forget it—before I get sick to my stomach."

Maclain grinned. "Do you get sick to your stomach, too?"

"All the time," she said gaily. "I suppose it's the penalty of living with a man like Howard."

"Well, I've got to be going," Maclain said hastily. He took hold of the waiting Schnucke and started for the front door. "I'm glad you feel better," he said by way of parting and added to himself as the elevator door closed him in, "Damned if I do!"

In the lobby downstairs the assistant manager directed Maclain to a telephone booth and watched through the glass door from a discreet distance away, mystified at the speed with which Maclain dialed.

Rena answered from the office. "There's a delegation here," she told him. "Dearborn and Springer, Gilbert Fox and Howard Hewitt."

"Hewitt?" Maclain repeated. "I'm glad to know where he is. I just left his wife."

"Shall I tell him?" Rena asked maliciously.

"No," said Maclain. "Get to work for a change. I left a list of material witnesses on your desk. Find it and mark this down after Gladys Hewitt."

"Malicious, mendacious, egocentric, martyriized, exaggerated sensitivity, subject to severe headaches and stomach-aches and inclined to accuse casual acquaintances of personal attacks of a sexual nature. I wanted to get it all down before I forgot it."

"Why not just put down 'hysterical neurotic'?"

"Clever; aren't you?" Maclain asked with a laugh. "How did you guess? I'll hop in a cab and be right down. Hold the customers until I get there!"

Chapter Twenty-one: THE TUNNEL OF LEGENDS

Two front-page murders in as many nights had put every available reporter on the job. Maclain knew the lobby of his apartment house would be well spotted.

Not wishing to be the center of a bulb-flashing, beseeching crowd, who singly were hard enough to shake off, he ordered his taxi to 71st and West End Avenue. From there it was a small walk to the rear entrance of the apartment, where an attendant took him upstairs on a freight elevator.

His four visitors were waiting in the reception room when he arrived. He had already had a careful description of Hewitt and Fox from Spud. Their greeting and handclasps enlightened him further on the widely different characteristics of the two men.

Hewitt's clasp Maclain classified as full and rounded: the unthinking, cordial grip of an intelligent man. The handclasp of Gilbert Fox unwittingly reminded the captain of a cultured, brainy woman. Its slight effeminacy was not unpleasant; rather, by some necromancy, it transferred to the recipient a touch of brilliance missing from Hewitt.

"Are the four of you together?" Maclain asked.

"Yes." The D. A.'s monosyllabic reply told Maclain a story. Dearborn had stopped after it on a half breath, as if straining against the repression of a flow of words. Unquestionably, some information of great importance had developed during the morning. For a moment, Maclain wondered if he were to be called off the case. He was already formulating plans to continue on behalf of Chick and Evelyn when he preceded the four men into the office.

From his accustomed place in back of the desk he remarked, with just the proper trace of interest,

"I hardly expected to see you so soon again, gentlemen."

"I hardly expected to be here, Maclain."

The captain reached for a jigsaw puzzle, dumped the pieces on the desk, and isolated Dearborn's reply as he might have picked a single piece from the heap before him. Relieved by Fate from the necessity of seeing, and the attendant intrusion of foreign elements, Maclain was able with clarity and nonconfusion to think along dual lines, follow a conversation—almost memorizing it as he went—and, even while listening and talking, work out the solution of a knotty and irrelevant problem.

On one occasion he succinctly explained this ability to a psychiatrist friend by saying, "Why marvel at me, Doctor, when every normal person you know shuts his eyes to think clearer? If you gaze at a picture in the midst of a conversation, subconsciously you're thinking of the picture while you're talking. I must make my own pictures to think of subconsciously. Fortunately, I can talk at the same time."

"I asked Mr. Fox and Mr. Hewitt to come here with me," Dearborn was saying. "They may be able to help us."

The captain sorted the pieces of wood on his desk while his face issued invitation to proceed. He was listening intently, but his mind was on sounds, separating and cataloging, probing back through millions of noises, soft and loud—trying to isolate a single one. As the four men in his office followed him in from the reception room and seated themselves, he had heard it clearly. Wraithlike as a passing glimpse of a familiar face, it was haunting him to a point of irritation. Somewhere—sometime—from the moment Evelyn Zarinka entered his office—two nights before—to the instant when he seated himself at the desk, he had

heard that sound.

Impatiently he gave up what appeared to be a hopeless task and turned his attention to Dearborn. He had searched for sounds before. Sometimes, if he put them out of mind, his quest was successful. They sprang to life like the illusive syllables of a familiar, but forgotten, proper name.

"I was afraid, when I heard you were here," Maclain remarked, "that you'd come to ask me to withdraw. You know how I feel about Chick."

"He can wait. Suppose we call it a truce." Dearborn leaned closer to punch his points home, his gray eyes trying to fathom the reactions by Maclain's face. "I was in a jam before, Maclain—I'm in a worse one now. Paul Zarinka sold out."

"To whom?" The captain pulled himself closer to the desk.

"To Hoefle. If that leaks. I'll have to leave town!"

"I'm sure you can trust Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Fox—but how many others know this, Claude?"

"I have to trust Hewitt and Fox," Dearborn declared savagely. "There's only one other person knows it—a woman."

"That's unfortunate," murmured Maclain.

"Not so unfortunate as it might be. She's a Miss Burberry who's been in my office for years. Luckily she's silent as a 1920 radio! She worked late at the office night before last."

"With Zarinka?"

"Yes—but she left before he did. She got out onto the street in the pouring rain and found she'd left her rubbers behind her."

"I see." The captain substituted a cigarette for his

puzzle. "You can trust this woman—Miss Burberry?"

"To the limit. When she got back upstairs to get her rubbers, a man was in the office talking to Paul."

"She knows him?"

"That's the rub—she stayed in the waiting-room outside and didn't even see him. She got frightened at his tone. He said something to Paul about \$300,000. She remembers distinctly that Paul said, 'I don't scare easy. Don't forget that half that nest egg is mine—and I'm the only one that knows where it is.'"

"That's not much evidence on which to accuse a man of selling out."

"She knows he sold out, Maclain. He bragged to her within the past month that he had the goods on Hoefle. She was incredulous, and he told her more—that he got them from a girl who hated Hoefle—a former mistress of Tom Delancey!"

"She died last night," said Maclain. "Do you still think Hartshorn's guilty?"

"How can I drop a case like that?" Dearborn spoke in desperation. "The papers are riding me—the governor's riding me—the police are riding me. Let the commissioner get a whiff of this cheese and its political maggots, and he'll turn every dick in the department loose on me to prove I sold out along with Paul."

"I'm afraid you're right, Claude." Maclain inhaled deeply. "There's one part of Miss Burberry's statement that sounds like hell—'half that nest egg's mine.'"

"Don't I know it?" Maclain could hear the snap of Dearborn's teeth as they closed. "I don't need to tell you everything in the files about Hoefle is missing! Maybe I've been guilty of neglect by trusting Zarinka. When it comes to bribes and malfeasance, I'll swear

before heaven, Maclain, my skirts are clean!"

The captain sucked in his lower lip and breathed deeply. "Those mice aren't so funny now, are they, Claude?"

"No," said Dearborn, "it's pretty clear. That's why I called on Hewitt and Fox. Zarinka planted that evidence against Hoefle—and probably most of that bribe money—somewhere underground in New York!"

"Why New York?" The cultured voice of Gilbert Fox entered the conversation. "There're tunnels in Brooklyn, too. One is the best I've ever heard of for a hide-out. Atlantic Avenue."

"And why Brooklyn," asked Maclain, "with so many possibilities close to hand?—sewers, conduits, subways, waterways, mail chutes." He rubbed his forehead and continued, almost admiringly, "Zarinka must have had a queer mind, Claude. He picked a place that was burglarproof and fireproof. I hope it's not searchproof."

"It can't be," Dearborn put in. "Somehow, Maclain, you've got to find that evidence against Hoefle—and the money, if it's with it."

"Even for \$300,000," said Maclain, "I rather hate the idea of going down into muck. Literally and figuratively speaking, I'm afraid I'll have to do just that before I'm through." He sat for a few minutes, chin in hand, then said, "He might have gone to Brooklyn, at that"—Paul's last words about the Sea Beach Express, which covered so much of Brooklyn, were still graphic to Maclain—"simply because no one would figure he'd go that much out of his way. I'll take it, Claude, and I warn you now: if I succeed, it's going to cost you plenty."

"It's worth plenty," said Dearborn with a sigh.

The captain's manner underwent a change. He had fitted several pieces of the puzzle together. Brusquely he returned them to the box. He considered Dearborn's action in bringing Fox and Hewitt to the office precipitate, to say the least. Both men were tied up with the unpredictable Gladys Hewitt whom he had left within the hour. Involved with a mercurial creature, such as she, either of the men justly could be classed as a suspect. Trapped, not able to free himself, Dearborn apparently had forgotten their involvement.

Maclain had not. He admitted their knowledge of underground New York was valuable. He could use it, and intended to, if properly tempered with caution. A headstrong, unplanned rush into conflict with a moneyed, organized opposition such as Benny Hoefle controlled, had one ending: disaster. Furthermore, although Dearborn's story sounded authentic, Dearborn was carbon hard and clever as original sin when fighting for a conviction. *Why has he so carefully side-stepped any mention of Chick's connection with Zarinka?* Maclain asked himself. The answer was all too transparent.

Dearborn intended to establish Chick as the partner in the tainted \$300,000. Maclain's problem was greater than merely discovering the cache of hidden evidence and money. He must break the charge of murder which had confined Charles Hartshorn to the Tombs—a double charge, for beyond question the same hand had placed the bomb in Paul Zarinka's car and the knife in Amy Arden's back.

Maclain's course was clear before him when he asked Gilbert Fox, "What makes you think Paul Zarinka might have picked the Atlantic Avenue tunnel in

Brooklyn?"

"Possibly because I've been in it myself." A light laugh mingled with his admission. "Possibly because of the strange legends which surround it."

"Tell him what you told me, Gilbert," Dearborn urged.

"After all," said Fox in his pleasant voice, "I'm an engineer. Let me give Captain Maclain the facts first. I was in the tunnel about twenty years ago—1916, to be exact. There was some talk at the time that it was dangerous and about to cave in. I found it in excellent preservation."

"Where's the entrance?" Maclain asked.

"Strangely enough, there's none—that I know of. I had one cut through and sealed it up after I left."

Howard Hewitt, who along with Springer had left the conversation entirely to the other three men, found the subject veering around to something with which he was familiar. He offered his first comment. "I've heard there were twenty or more secret entrances to that place"—he broke his statement by lighting a particularly vicious pipe—"and that there's an old wood-burning locomotive sealed up in it and nobody knows what else."

"Newspaper talk, I'm afraid, Howard," said Fox. "I'll admit I didn't explore the entire thing—just enough to satisfy myself it was in good condition."

"You've never heard of secret entrances?" Hewitt persisted.

"I've heard of all sorts of things about that tunnel." Maclain knew the engineer was smiling broadly. "I hate to explode good copy, but I can only tell you what I saw while I was in it. That was nothing."

"And that was twenty years ago, also," said Maclain, adding in a conversational tone, "Rena, get me the librarian of the Long Island Historical Society on Pierrepont Street in Brooklyn."

The room was silent, broken only by the puff of Hewitt's pipe and the uneasy twisting of Springer's bulk as he moved in his chair. Dearborn broke it by saying, "The captain's secretary—Mrs. Savage—takes down everything that's said in here. Our entire conversation can be heard through a detecto-dictograph in the adjoining room."

Fox laughed again, and Howard Hewitt said between puffs, "It's all right with me. I haven't said anything."

The phone on Maclain's desk buzzed softly. He talked for two minutes, then hung up. "You hit on a splendid idea, Mr. Fox," he declared slowly. "You heard my conversation. All the data the library has on the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel was examined six weeks ago. A man spent three hours going over it. He signed their records 'Paul Zarinka.'"

Chapter Twenty-two: THE UNDERGROUND PLAN

MACLAIN was relaxed on a divan usually occupied by Spud. He ruthlessly put Dearborn's problems from his mind and settled himself for an hour of music. A touch of the remote control button by the divan started the big Capehart.

Lost in a rich melody of Dvorák's *New World Symphony*, he was scarcely conscious of Rena's return from a pilgrimage in Brooklyn. She stuck her head in the door, saw he was resting, and went into her own office.

There, from her notes, she made an Ediphone record of information secured in two hours of research.

With her record complete, she tried the switch at her end of the detecto-dictograph. The microphone switch in Maclain's office was open. He had followed the *New World Symphony* with a record of the *Nut-cracker Suite*. Rena waited until the last strains of the music died away before she went in. "Now I'll play one," she told him.

She slipped the record on the Ediphone beside his desk and made the necessary adjustments so it would be amplified through the Capehart.

Maclain sighed regretfully and dragged himself back from the music to the sound of Rena's voice:

"Brooklyn had the first subway in the world. It was started in 1836. It took seven years to build and was used for 16 years by one of the first railroads in the country—the Brooklyn and Jamaica Railroad—which had a total length of 10 miles. The subway was closed up in 1859—77 years ago. It extended under Atlantic Avenue from Boerum Place to Emmett Street—approximately five city blocks, passing—underground—Court, Clinton, Henry and Hicks streets. At Emmett Street the tunnel ended and the train came out into an open cut, past Columbia Street and Furman Street, to the station at South Ferry. At Court Street the subway's roof was one foot under the street. The arch within was 17 feet high and 21 feet wide. At Clinton Street the subway was 13 feet under the street. Quoting from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 23, 1911: Quote. 'In its depths it's practically certain that there's one old wood-burning locomotive—and nobody knows what else. There are probably 20 secret entrances.' Unquote.

Other articles, unauthenticated, give weird tales of distillers, river pirates and various bandits who have used the tunnel as a hideout and a place to store their loot. For a time, near-by Italian residents used its dark interior as a mushroom cave. Recently the Brooklyn police received anonymous letters saying they should investigate the tunnel. An investigation was made, but it was impossible to find an entrance. The police did not go inside. The only plan available is one which was filed in the engineer's office of the Nassau Water Department on February 21, 1868. It is a cross-section plan signed by Van Brunt Bergen. Later accurate data is not available."

The record stopped with a click. Maclain left the divan, went to his desk and heard it through again. He touched a button beside him, and the time signal announced 4:15. Another button brought Rena.

"Good," he said. "I don't suppose you could get hold of the copy of the Van Brunt Bergen plan?"

"There was a copy in the newspaper—I made a tracing. I also made one from the street plan. I'll have them ready for you in a minute."

"Where can I reach Spud?"

"He said he'd be at the Hi-de-Ho Club until nearly five."

"Get him on the phone, please—but bring the maps first."

She was back almost instantly with two large pieces of heavy drawing paper. With the drawing paper thumbtacked to a hard-rubber drawing board, she had made copies of the plans, using a sharp-pointed stylus. Each line left a small groove, delicately legible to Maclain's fingers.

Lightly following each indentation, he indelibly committed the plans to memory, interrupting himself only long enough to answer the phone and talk to Spud.

"How are you making out?" he asked.

"The show's just about over. It took some time to round up all the performers—and some persuasion to get them here."

"The lockers?"

"Archer's having them checked."

"I've one more job," said Maclain. "There's a man named Di Angelo who has a grocery store on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. It's in the two-fifties. You take the I. R. T. Subway to Borough Hall—"

"I can buy spaghetti here in the Village," Spud protested.

"I want information—not spaghetti. Di Angelo was born there and has lived there all his life. Tell him I sent you, Spud. It's important. I want every bit of information he can give you about the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel. It's been sealed up for years, but it's still there under the street."

"What can he tell you?"

"That's for you to find out. He's a gossip—and he knows everybody around there. The principal thing I want to know is how to get in it. If Di Angelo doesn't know, see if he can put you in touch with someone who does."

"I suppose the mice have come to life again!" Spud said.

"Yes, the mice."

"What about getting Archer to send one of the Italian squad?"

"That's out. In the first place, Di Angelo wouldn't talk to the police. In the second place, we're not working for the police now—we're working for Dearborn—and Chick."

"You confuse me terribly—linking those two together as clients," said Spud, "but I'll do my best. You're not by any chance thinking of going down in that place?"

"I can't," said Maclain, "until you find us a way to get in."

He hung up and walked to the French doors overlooking the terrace, then flung them open and stepped out. The sheltering awning was sizzling hot over his head. Schnucke, relieved of her harness in the house, rose from her place beside the desk and followed him, coming up from behind and standing at his left.

Dreist, whose commodious kennel bordered the wall by the doors, roused from a nap and stood up, lightly rattling the chain which tethered him to the kennel. In spite of their opposite dispositions, the two dogs got along well together. Dreist's brief wag of the tail was more for Schnucke than Maclain. It was no part of Dreist's training to become too friendly with any man—even with Spud and the captain, to whom he was most loyal.

Maclain walked to the waist-high brick wall surrounding the terrace, hands clasped behind him. He stood turning his head as though he might be looking out over the vast congestion stretching away below. Schnucke watched him disapprovingly, ears erect, sensitive to the danger just beyond the wall.

Maclain was sensitive to danger, too. Spud thought him as keenly intuitive as the dog who adored him.

During the years of their partnership it had ceased to be a novelty for some conscienceless member of the criminal world to try to get Duncan Maclain. Cappel Marsh had spent three weeks in a hospital and still bore the scars of two bullets poured into Maclain's car from a sub-machine gun; Spud was still troubled in damp weather with a five-inch red streak on his right thigh, attesting to the keenness of an Italian bootlegger's knife during Prohibition. Yet unremitting caution, coupled with the instinct Spud spoke of, had brought the blind member of the firm through unscathed.

As Maclain stood at the wall, a remark Spud had made the day before came back to him: *Run foul of Hoefle, and you'll have half the thugs of New York trailing you and Schnucke around in a parade.*

Maclain turned it over in his mind and added to it the circumstances of Paul's death and the murder of the girl beside him the night before. Last night he had known nothing which could make him a dangerous factor to anyone. If he had . . . He shivered, and Schnucke pressed closer to his leg. A shift of two feet could have placed him instead of Amy Arden, in the morgue.

This afternoon the situation had altered. Dimly, like fog shaping on water, flashes of the truth had come to him since morning. They were misty and unformed—demonishly evanescent when he tried to fit them together—yet real they were, and the very shadow of their realness spelled danger.

Why he overlooked it, he never knew. The striking warmth of the sun on his back lulled him. The security of the penthouse, the presence of his dogs, and the

opiate of an hour's music all tended to blunt the sharpness which had saved him many times before.

He returned to the coolness of the office and sat down at the desk. He could see no flaw in his plan. To be doubly sure, he inserted a piece of paper in the typewriter behind him and listed the names of his morning's visitors. To the list he added *Spud* and *Di Angelo*. He rang for Rena, handed her the list, and said, "I'm going to lie down and rest. Give Spud this list when he comes in—and call me at the same time. I'm going to explore that Atlantic Avenue Tunnel tonight. Everyone's on here who knows that I'm interested in it."

Rena took it and read it through, then glanced at him with a look of singular affection which she occasionally bestowed on Duncan Maclain.

"Everyone's on here. Duncan, except me. That's careless—for you—frightfully careless."

Chapter Twenty-three: THE LAWYER AND THE DETECTIVE

SPUD had long since learned the futility of attempting to dissuade Duncan Maclain from his plans. Such a course had no other effect than to cause Maclain's stubbornness to jell—a jelly which quickly hardened to the consistency of set cement. Instead, at dinner, over a dish of chicken à la marengo, he supplied Maclain with tales corralled from the garrulous Di Angelo.

"He was in there when he was a boy," Spud declared with a tinge of sarcasm. "That was back slightly before the California gold rush—and Brooklyn was teeming with a population of twenty thousand!"

The dining-room door opened to admit Cappel, bear-

ing coffee. Spud stopped until the Negro had departed. Maclain had warned him not to discuss the matter where anyone might overhear.

Maclain knew Rena's remark about the list was a hint that she considered the undertaking hazardous. She knew the captain as well as Spud and never wasted time with the ineffectuality of direct warnings. When Cappel had cleared away the dishes, she brought the matter up again by saying, "I recorded all the information I could get from the library this afternoon, Spud. Did you hear it?"

"Yes. The part about the old engine and the pirates fits in nicely with the stories of Dunc's Italian friend."

"Give us the rest," said Maclain. "You make it sound interesting."

"The two of you sound as if I was swallowing this stuff, hook, line and sinker!"

"You're not nervous, are you, Spud?"

"Not me. I just don't like rats. The ones in the tunnel were big as bulldogs when Di Angelo started to talk, and grew steadily in size until one of them charged him with a horn on its nose."

Maclain's eyebrows wriggled in delight. "Maybe we'd better get a hunting license and take a repeating rifle with us. I'd hate to have Schnucke eaten alive. What about the pirates?"

"They hid loot in there," Spud assured him warmly, "and bodies!—they're laid along the old railroad track like ties. The place is full of bodies—stiff and cold—with knives in them!"

"Don't get whimsical," said Rena. "Tell us what the man said."

"I'm trying to," said Spud. "There's an old loco-

tive in there—and the ghost of a dead engineer. He drives it up and down the tracks on Whitsuntide Eve, and it belches smoke out on the taxicabs—and a ghost on a skeleton horse rides ahead of him waving a red flag!”

“Communistic,” said Maclain. “Now that you have described the delights of this utopia, how do we get in it?”

“Ah,” said Spud, gurgling merrily, “through the secret entrances!”

“Did you find out where they were?”

“Certainly. There’s one in every house along both sides of Atlantic Avenue—according to Di Angelo.”

“Do you think he knows what he’s talking about?”

“Sure he does. I asked him if he knew how to find any of the secret entrances, and he wanted to know how an entrance could be secret if anybody could find it.”

“It looks like a washout.” Maclain’s face showed such disappointment that Spud felt contrite.

“I did get one bite before I left, Dunc. Di Angelo claims absolutely that there’s an entrance to the tunnel in an old yellow frame house near Hicks Street. I took a look at it. It’s a two-story frame, and half of the bottom part looks as if it used to be a store or a fish market.”

“Deserted?” The single word was eager.

“I don’t think anybody’s been in it in fifty years. The downstairs windows are boarded up, and most of the panes are broken out of the second floor.”

The captain sipped his coffee and drummed his fingers on the damask cloth. “Ask Cappo to bring some brandy, Rena.”

She gave the order. When the big goblets were set in place and the brandy poured, she warmed hers, cupped in her slender hands, swished it around to get the fumes, and drank it silently. White-faced, she sipped at her coffee but said nothing. She wished the two men would not go, but knew nothing could stop them.

They were in the office listening to the radio's clipped resume of the two murders when the phone rang. Rena answered and, with a hand over the mouthpiece, said, "Max Gold—representing Mr. Hartshorn."

Maclain's lips puckered with a mixture of surprise and pleasure. "Evelyn said she was going to retain an attorney for Chick—I didn't know she'd pick the best in the country. Have him come up." He turned to Spud. "See that the automatic elevator is on this floor, Spud, and run down and describe him from the twenty-fourth. I'll wait on the private phone."

Spud disappeared, and Maclain took his place back of the desk, holding the interapartment phone to his ear. Rena went to the reception hall to greet the visitor. By the time Max Gold stepped from the automatic elevator which served the penthouse, the captain had his description well in mind: 45, five feet two. Light-blue suit with pin stripes. Combination gray shirt, tie and handkerchief. Beautiful teeth, pleasant face. Polished, and hard as nails.

Max Gold's greeting was cordial to an extreme, without an attempt to conceal open admiration.

Underneath it, Maclain felt the iron of wariness, the refusal to trust without proof, which had made the diminutive criminal lawyer a giant in the courts. The captain knew he had a black mark to obliterate before Gold would accept a word of advice or show a crevice

in his natural guardedness.

Max Gold knew of Maclain's friendship for Chick; he knew equally well Maclain was retained by Dearborn. Max Gold knew of Evelyn's visit on behalf of her brother. Equally well he was aware of Maclain's close relationship with Inspector Davis and Sergeant Archer.

The captain's sole advantage was the reputation Max Gold had of knowing everything before he made a move.

The attorney took a chair and filled the office with the aroma of the finest cigar it had ever been Maclain's pleasure to smell. He tendered one to Maclain, but the captain refused. He liked cigars, but smoking them distracted him. He preferred the shortness of a cigarette, which freed his fingers for other things, for his training of his fingers never relaxed, even during conversation.

"You're a friend of Charles Hartshorn?" Gold began.

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Since he was a boy. I knew his father—before the war."

"Thank you," said Gold. "I understood that from Miss Zarinka."

Additional smoke reached Maclain's nostrils.

"Years of practice have taught me it requires uncommon dexterity to serve two masters. Accuse me of obtuseness if you will—the paradoxical phases of any case perplex me. I'm a man who detests perplexity."

"I dislike perplexity, too," said Maclain. "Will it be dissipated if I tell you I represent Dearborn politically

and Hartshorn because he's my friend? When politics interfere with my friendship, I quit politics. The same attitude applies to my business—I place friendship first. It's cost me money in the past."

Gold was amused and showed none of it. "It will cost you money in the future, Captain Maclain. Along with perplexity, I dislike similes. I'll make one. Both of us deal with honest men and crooks. We are successful so long as we can separate one from the other. I presume the parallel continues when I say neither of us believes Hartshorn guilty?"

"You're correct there."

"Good!" Gold sighed and flicked an ash from his cigar. "Interest is greater than fees. What a challenge it is to a man of intelligence—to prove two hundred people wrong and himself right! To prove that any mob is wrong! I've decided to join forces with you, Captain Maclain. Shall we pool our interests—and, if so, where do we start?"

Maclain decided without cavil. Added to Max Gold's reputation was a driving force which flowed from the attorney on the most casual contact.

Besides, Maclain had nothing to lose. Together, they might break an air-tight case. Singly, either of them might fail.

"I'll be glad to join you, Mr. Gold. There's one stipulation. We work together. I'll place all available information I have at your disposal. I expect you to do the same. It will be your job to take the facts I give you and mold them into a legal defense. That's uphill all the way! I have a surer method—but it may be even harder to accomplish. Dearborn has retained me for that purpose—to find the man who *is* guilty!"

"Sometime," said Max Gold, "when you begin to get discouraged, you should enter my profession—and try to find a client who isn't!"

Chapter Twenty-four: WITH PICKAX IN THE DARK

DAYLIGHT lingered tenaciously. Maclain chafed, waiting for darkness to descend. Max Gold had left before nine with an appointment for the following day, when he would arrange an interview for them both with Chick at the Tombs. The captain had no intention of starting a probe of the abandoned Atlantic Avenue Tunnel in the daylight. Neither did he want to make it so late as to attract undue attention to himself and Schnucke. He felt, rightly, they would make an unusual appearance in the neighborhood of Atlantic Avenue and Hicks Street should they arrive there too late and find the neighborhood more or less deserted.

Maclain spent another half hour familiarizing himself with a portion of his slotted map of Brooklyn which he denominated "E 5." It took in the section from Borough Hall to the river, and included the place he planned to visit.

When he finally instructed Cappo, some of his latent caution, lost in the afternoon, returned. He chose a most indirect route to their destination, going downtown to Delancey Street, across the Williamsburg Bridge, and along Kent Avenue to Myrtle, where they turned right and proceeded to Borough Hall. Spud and Maclain alighted in front of Joe's Restaurant, but instructed Cappo, who was inured to Maclain's maneuvers, to park on Montague Street and await their return.

From Joe's they proceeded on foot, following a rather intricate route which adhered to Maclain's invisible pattern. It took them by way of Remsen Street, fairly deserted, and across Joralemon, down Hicks, so that with Atlantic Avenue ahead, they approached the dilapidated yellow house from the rear.

With the exception of a few Brooklynites, stewing on their own doorsteps, the streets were deserted. The preceding two days of rain had left the city steaming. Lighted open windows showed hapless residents, unable to get away, were finding it less hot inside than out.

Spud was carrying a three-foot-long, paper-wrapped parcel under his arm. Maclain's fast pace, broken with hesitancy only at crossings, had Spud dripping before three blocks lay behind them. Spud was the warier of the two. The heat depressed him—engendered in him a queer sensation of playing a game. He could not relegate their quest to its proper niche as a part of their business. It was too fantastic to be adjustable. Old wives' tales had no place in the serried streets of New York and Brooklyn. A tunnel, authenticated by press and city engineers, sealed up and abandoned for 77 years, blended fact and fancy too closely for him to comprehend it.

He shifted the package under his arm as Maclain stopped for a crossing. The captain touched it and asked, "What have you?"

"I brought a pickax," Spud told him. "We can put it together if we need it."

"There's something we didn't bring," said Maclain as Schnucke started across the street. "Mice."

Spud stopped on the opposite sidewalk and mopped

his brow. "If this is the right place, we'll need them, won't we? Zarinka had them."

"If it's the right place, Spud, we won't need them—the mice Zarinka had were alive. The risk we run is that this is the wrong place." He started on.

"You going to take it?"

"I'm going to rely on Gilbert Fox's statement that the air in the tunnel was pure."

"That was twenty years ago," Spud reminded him.

"With my own nose along, and Schnucke's, I'll chance it. The most likely gases are illuminating gas or sewer gas. I can spot either of them long before they reach the danger point."

Spud sniffed. "I can smell them now, but I'll go along. What's your plan?"

"Wait'll we get inside the house, and I'll tell you. Did you bring a flashlight?"

"Certainly," Spud told him. "I can't see in the dark like you can."

A noisome alleyway, cluttered with debris, brought them to the rear of the yellow building. It was weatherbeaten and paint blistered on the outside, a relic of days when farmers, their Percherons hitched to a rail in front, bartered and traded, or drank a glass of ale, on their way to the ferry which would carry them to the New York markets. Atlantic Avenue was the pride of Brooklyn in those days, and as late as 1856 a horseman actually did ride on the street above the tunnel, preceding the puffing train below. His duties were to warn the farmers of the approaching subterranean monster whose belching smoke from the tunnel vents scared their horses into fits. The horseman's task of keeping ahead of the train was not so difficult, since

the scheduled run of 10 miles from Brooklyn to Jamaica was two hours and 45 minutes.

Spud was caught in a swirl of Di Angelo's reminiscences as he tried the back door of the ancient house. Maclain, close behind him, listened intently. "It's nailed up with boards across on the inside, Spud. I can tell by the sound of it."

"You win," said Spud. "It is. There's a window to the left. I'll try it. If I can't do anything else, I'll pry off the boards with the pick. I'll bet a policeman hasn't looked at the back of this place since Father Knickerbocker was a boy."

The boards proved tractable enough to be pulled out. Spud pulled them out by hand, disclosing a paneless sash raised to the top. His flashlight showed that the window opened on a dirty rear room, utterly denuded of furniture.

Schnucke was too hampered by her harness to jump through. Spud lifted her in, and she stood with her gray nose protruding over the edge of the sill, waiting to see if her master would follow. Spud gave Maclain a hand and climbed in himself.

He had not entirely removed the outside boards which closed the window and was able to pull them back partially into place. With the downstairs windows boarded up, he was certain he ran no risk in showing a light.

Schnucke stood indecisively by the captain, waiting for orders, then led Maclain after Spud through another room, dirtier than the first, and into a hall. Maclain was silent, counting his steps and turns, until Spud stopped. "What's here?" he asked.

"Staircase going upstairs."

"Is there a door underneath it?"

"Yes—at the back."

"If there's a basement," Maclain declared, "that'll lead to it."

Spud's light disclosed narrow, rickety stairs leading down behind the door. Guiding himself with the flash, he led the way. Schnucke paused disapprovingly, but at Maclain's command of "Forward" she followed Spud, daintily testing the descent.

Fetid, accumulated air of half a century met them in the basement. Again Spud had an emotion absent since childhood—that he was about to pass into another world, like Alice in the book. He put it down with a laugh but wondered if Maclain's inability to see the dishevelment of the cellar kept the captain so calm.

"One thing sure," said Spud, "Paul Zarinka was never in here."

"I know that." The captain was confident. "There hasn't been a breath of fresh air in this place in a decade. What's around us?"

Spud placed a hand on Maclain's shoulder and turned him so he was facing toward Atlantic Avenue. "The tunnel's directly ahead, but God knows how much wall there is between us and it. There are three piles of empty beer cases in the corner to your front and left. They're piled four deep, but there're no bottles in them. Back of you, along the wall to the left, is an old-fashioned bookcase. It sags slightly forward, and looks as if it might turn over. There's a pie plate on the bottom shelf with some springs in it—and something which looks as if it might have been oil. There's a door in the wall in the center, at your back. It leads to another room—which I can give you in a minute. To

the left of the door, and at your left, at your back, are a hundred or more wine bottles, covered with dust and empty. The stairs going up to the next floor are directly at your left. That's all."

"I've got it," said Maclain. "Now, the other room." He turned about face, ordered Schnucke forward, and walked assuredly to the door, halting Schnucke just before he entered the other room. Spud preceded him with the flash.

"Nothing in there."

Maclain stepped through the door and said in a whisper, testing for size, "Hello." Then louder: "Hello! Sounds as if it's about thirty feet square. It must extend out under the back of the house, judging from the size of the rooms upstairs. Do you see a cellar door?"

Spud walked to the rear of the basement and looked up. "None," he said. "Maybe you've miscalculated."

Maclain went to the back of the basement and made an about turn, standing with his back to the wall; then he paced straight through both rooms to the wall at the front. "I miscalculated in the wrong direction," he told Spud. "The basement extends six feet out under the street. Put your pick together for me and go on upstairs. I'm going to try and find if there ever was an opening from here to that tunnel."

"You're crazy as hell!" Spud exclaimed indignantly. "Do you think I'm going to leave you down here?"

"Don't be silly, Spud." Maclain's voice was patient. "Put me upstairs and I'm useless. Anybody can creep in and knock me over the head or shoot me through the back from a window. It may take three hours work here before I'm satisfied. If there's an opening here, or

if there ever was one, I can find it—and you can't. I'm going over each of these walls with that pick. I can detect instantly if they've ever been opened and resealed, or if there's a hollow behind them."

"I'll go," said Spud, "but there're times, Dunc, when you drive me nuts!"

The captain waited until Spud's retreating footsteps were silent overhead. Then he took off his coat and shirt, folded them and laid them on the fourth step from the bottom. He had worn the oldest clothes he had and was heedless of dirt. Before starting to work he made a tour of the room, locating the objects Spud had mentioned.

He started with the front wall, striking it with light staccato blows of the pick. He worked swiftly and with a precision which in 30 minutes had left a geometrical pattern of dots over half the dirty wall.

From the front center he walked to the other side, carefully removed the piled-up beer crates, and started from the corner out. In 30 minutes more he abandoned the front wall. It was solid and had never been disturbed. He sat down on one of the beer crates and thought it out. Secret passages. He'd forgotten what Di Angelo said. A man building a secret passage from his basement to the abandoned tunnel would never put it in the most obvious place. *I'm getting a bit thick*, Maclain told himself. He took hold of Schnucke, who had stood close beside him as he worked, and walked to the rear of the basement, then knelt down and felt the floor. It was muddy and damp. He took the pick and, using the handle carefully, began to checkerboard the wet dirt beneath his feet, making squares about a yard in diameter.

Near the center of the room, on the left-hand side facing front, the pick handle struck what he was seeking—part of an old wooden base, rotten and decayed. Maclain walked to the wall and began prodding overhead with the pick. One of his strokes met no resistance. He reached up and shoved his hand in a round hole about a foot in diameter. He was right! The furnace had stood at one time in the rear of the basement. Where would a man be most likely to locate an entrance to a secret tunnel? In back of a furnace in the room away from the street. How would he run it in a corner house? Decidedly not under the house next door.

Maclain took up his pick, probing again—working down from the flue. Three feet down, and about four feet from the floor, the resonance sharpened. He stopped and straightened up.

“Spud,” he called. His own voice answered, coming back from the front room mixed with a new noise following in its train. Faint as the rustle of a mouse in a basket of crumpled cellophane, the noise seeped down from the floor above, ugly and impersonal.

Rigid, he stood, hardly daring to read its portent. Schnucke moved uneasily beside him and whined.

Then louder, and with panic creeping through: “Spud!”

Mockingly, his own voice answered again. And then, for the first time, he heard the rattling of cellophane increased to a miniature devil’s tattoo—a million infinitesimal detonations—peanut brittle breaking in a paper sack.

Schnucke was close against his leg now, twisting uneasily, but making no move to go without his orders.

He fought back the stark dread which entered his heart and, with quick emotion, knelt down beside her, placed an arm around her neck, and pressed his face close against the warmth of her shaggy coat.

"If you can take it, old girl, I guess I can, too," Mac-lain said reassuringly. "That's fire!"

Chapter Twenty-five: THE FIREBUG

MADONNA was a youth as impersonal as the death which he dealt out with such aplomb. Dragged up through the oven of Hell's Kitchen in an era when law violation was heroic and violators were heroes, he set himself a mark at the precocious age of eight. He was more animal than human, imbued with an edged cunning eugenically instilled in him by a mother of the streets and her protector. His cunning was in no wise impaired by the blunting edge of intelligence, for he lacked intelligence entirely. The lack made him a far-greater menace, for intelligence makes humans think, and thinking sometimes stays the hand.

The gangs which swarmed and fought over traffic-infested streets, vacant lots and railroad yards, never took him in. Consequently, he lost even the slightly softening influence of gang spirit in the boys' clubs. Miraculously, he had escaped the police. He was 17 when Repeal threw him out of his nearest approach to honest work—armed guard for a beer truck. At 20, through a process of deserting sinking gangsters like the proverbial rat, and leaving two of them dead in the process of desertion, he still managed to have money, a car, and the fine raiment which his heart so craved.

His assigned job of trailing a blind man was one filled with zest and much to his liking. The fact that excitement was somewhat dulled by the man's blindness was compensated by the man's reputation as a private op. Excitement was a necessity to Madonna, but private ops, along with the police, were plagues.

Madonna's coupé was parked two blocks away when Maclain's sedan, with Cappelletti at the wheel, left the apartment house. Madonna gave it a good start, struck a match to light a cigarette, and, with the match lighted, showed his perfect teeth and looked at them in the rear-view mirror.

If any useful quality whatever existed in Madonna, it was his ability as a trailer. He had routed nocturnal beer trucks through every main and isolated byway of New York, Brooklyn and immediate vicinity. As an unobtrusive guard his job had been to cling relentlessly to their winking taillights without his coupé becoming apparent to potential hijackers or the police.

His technique was flawless as he stuck to the sedan carrying Spud and Maclain. Right-turning ahead of them when they stopped for red lights, he would circle a block and pick them up again as they came along, checking and guessing their course with experienced second sight, always taking advantage of the sheltering cars which intervened. He had an additional advantage of believing they were headed for Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, although their exact destination was vague.

At Borough Hall he watched them alight in front of Joe's. Some of his jaunty pleasure at his own accomplishment disappeared. By the time he drove the coupé into Remsen Street and parked in front of the darkened brownstone bulk of the T. G. and T., he was

seething with what he considered righteous anger.

About the dirtiest trick he had ever had played on him was still fresh in his mind. It was against all codes to turn loose a dog on a defenseless man. What chance had a fellow to get away from a brute that sailed over fences like a man-eating tiger, hurled himself at your legs, and stood over you with foam-dripping jaws after you were down? He patted the holster under his arm before he left the car to take up the trail, but he was not reassured. A dog had no sense. You could blast at one of them eight times, and it just made them madder. He had plenty of faith in his own shooting, but he was no big-game hunter, and a charging dog was hard to hit.

Irritably rankling, and with caution doubly renewed, he resumed his duties two blocks in back of the trio. Choosing his doorways with inconspicuous nonchalance, he knew he had not been seen when Spud and Maclain entered the alley back of the yellow house. From the safe shadow of a fence across the alleyway, he watched them disappear inside. He remained motionless where he was for ten minutes or more before walking around the house to look the place over.

He had completed his duties for the evening safely and with an economy of effort, but Madonna was never satisfied.

Those who knew him never trusted him entirely. Madonna's wiliness extended just far enough to make him aware of it. In return, his treacherous, bungling efforts to protect his own ends brought many carefully concocted schemes to premature denouement. Really big money was in sight—a sum too large to fit comfortably in Madonna's kernel of a mind. Unintention-

ally he had followed fortune to its storehouse and stood at the entrance to a Midas's cave. Blocking his way were two men and a dog. With them gone, the Sesame would belong to Madonna, and to him alone.

He whistled runelessly through his teeth, hatching great thoughts, until the scheme waxed colossal. With a single brilliant *riposte*, he could not only vanquish the guardians, but destroy all visible evidence of the entrance. It was the most delectable idea of his entire career, and it promised, in addition to wealth, fierce and fuming excitement.

Round surprised eyes checked the street and found the moment safe. He sauntered around to the alleyway, hands in pockets—and there became, if possible, less human than before.

He inserted his slender form through the small space between the boards and the sill of the window with extreme caution. His progress was that of a shedding constrictor, for, through the door connecting the back room with the front, he could see a cigarette's tip draw fiery lines as it moved from hand to mouth, puffed red, and was lowered again.

Madonna followed the wall, nursing a blackjack in his hand. As Spud took a last puff and started for the hall to inquire about Maclain's progress, Madonna's light, crepe-soled shoes made four quick strides. The blackjack swung in an arc. Madonna caught Spud as he fell, lowered him noiselessly to the floor, then searched his motionless form with light pickpocket fingers.

Madonna was trained in many nefarious ways; part of his equipment, which he carried with him, was surgical tape. Its uses were legion. They ranged from

holding a cut-out pane of glass to rendering a victim impotently helpless.

With fluttering fingers deft as a surgeon's, he taped Spud's wrists and ankles and gagged him securely. The sound of Maclain's testing pickax was audible from below. The flashlight in Spud's pocket tempted Madonna greatly, but he considered it incriminating and left it. He was certain Maclain had found an entrance to the tunnel and was digging his way through. Compared to Spud Savage, conquest of the blind man would be easy—and above all things, Madonna wanted to know the location of that entrance. He walked to the door leading to the cellar and stopped. Wrathfully he bit at his thin lips—not only was he afraid to overpower Maclain, but he was afraid to risk a descent to the basement where without Maclain's knowledge he might flash the light which would tell him the truth. More than that, he grew panicky at the thought of even opening the door. The blind man was no deterrent, but the tearing, slashing fangs of a dog who attacked without warning were not to be faced. He must stick to his original plan. Later, he could return and explore for the entrance unmolested. *Much later*, he thought grinning mirthlessly, *when things have cooled off*.

With no more noise than flickering lights on a wall, he made two trips through the rooms and in and out the window. The alley was cluttered, the rear of the house next door piled high. The pile yielded newspapers and, best of all, excelsior. He started to haul Spud into the hall but was afraid of making a noise. Instead, he piled his train of fuel around the inert form.

His work was hampered only by his constant listening for the sound of Maclain and the dog. He remedied that by finding a board and wedging it tight between the wall of the hall and the cellar door.

Satisfied at last, he slipped through the window and stood against the house, looking around. A hot, late wind had sprung up, stirring odors in the alley. He stood up on a small box, leaned over the window sill into the room, and took a package of paper matches from his pocket, bending the pasteboard cover far back so that the matches stood out straight. He held them at arm's length, struck one, and touched it to the others. They flared up in a flash and a soft rustle. He tossed them into a small pile of excelsior in the corner, slid out from under the boards, and quickly shoved the window cover close in, hoping the nails would hold.

He took enough time to remove the small box from underneath the window, then cautiously left the alleyway.

Chapter Twenty-six: THE CELLAR

WHERE frenzy began with most people, lucidity began with Duncan Maclain. Danger inspired him with an abnormal clarity of thought, slicing away unessentials at a stroke, clean and sterile as the cut of a scalpel.

Let him become confused, let his judgment of distance and his memorized count of steps become turbid with fear, and he was lost. He knew that he and Spud had blundered—underrated cunning adversaries—foolishly walked into needless danger. Like an army at war, relaxed vigilance and stupidity had one price—

life. Relentlessly he put aside the thought that Spud must have paid. It was deadening to his faculties when he had double need of them all.

Fumes from above had already reached him thinly, shouting the grave necessity for speed. Back to the wall under the flue, he faced the center of the room, ordered Schnucke forward, and counted nine paces. A left turn and 27 paces more brought him to the basement wall at the front of the house. He followed it around the right angle to the foot of the rickety stairs. When Schnucke stopped at the bottom he located the first step with the handle of the pickax and ordered her on.

The door at the top was closed. He paused before it, making lightning judgment of the effect of the updraft when it was opened. Instantly he realized it was a chance he must take and pushed it, only to find it firmly wedged. Hampered by the narrow stairwell, it took two quarter-arc swings of the pick to demolish the panel. He drew back from the heat which belched into his face. For an instant he relinquished the pick. The balance of the ancient panel yielded to the rending strength of his muscular hands and arms. He reached through, searched the door for the impeding object with fingers agile as a spider's legs.

Surging with a murderous, lustful rage, he tore loose the wedged board and dropped it to the floor. Two steps ahead was the hall wall, hot to his fingers. He shifted his touch to the wall under the stairs which led to the second floor, turned toward the front of the house and ordered Schnucke forward. She refused to move. Firmly he repeated the command, but Schnucke's eyes and nose warned her of the peril Maclain

could not see. Flames were licking across the end of the hall, traveling rapidly from treads to risers on the dry, worn stairs leading to the second floor.

"I'm sorry, old girl," he said shortly, "I guess I'll have to go alone."

He released his hold on her harness, propped the shattered cellar door open with the pick, and started along the hall. Schnucke barked sharply—something she seldom did. It was nine strides from the cellar door to the foot of the burning stairs. At the fifth stride Maclain took, his fingers, following the wall, touched the base of the banisters shoulder high on the fifth step up. He drew away sharply, scorched with melted varnish.

Without touch to guide him, he searchingly moved both extended hands in a circle in front of him, took four more strides and turned to the left. Every one of his acute senses shrieked a warning. Seized with a paroxysm of coughing, scarcely able to breathe, he dropped to his hands and knees, heedfully testing the floor about him with soft light pats. He found fire to his right. Unmindful of his burned palm, he bore to the left and crawled on. The floor was blistering on hands and knees, but there was no safety anywhere for Duncan Maclain without Spud.

Fearful that he had lost the door to the room in bearing to the left, he rose halfway to his knees and groped ahead. Hot shaggy fur pressed against him, shoving him insistently to the right. He stifled his coughing and mopped streaming tears with a shielding handkerchief.

"Your trainer said you'd go through hell for a man, Schnucke," Maclain gasped, "but I never thought I'd

have to ask you to do it. Where's Spud, Schnucke? We've got to find him!"

Slowly she moved ahead, shifting him cautiously to the right and then to the left. His eyebrows and hair were singed when she stopped five feet ahead, but his hand touched cloth.

There was no time to waste. He was weakening, and he knew it. With the fingers of his burned right hand locked painfully in the back of Spud's collar, he half rose to his feet. Utterly confused as to direction, there were no commands he could give. He just clung to the brace on Schnucke's back and said, "I'll leave it to you, old girl—let's get out of here."

It was a long, long journey. Spud's limp form grew heavier inch by inch, but Maclain was an automaton, obsessed with the fixed idea that he must cling to dog and man. The flames were consuming the stripped-off wallpaper in the hall when Schnucke stopped at the top of the cellar stairs. Maclain tried to turn her toward the front door, but a single explorative touch of the toe and the smoke of scorching leather from his shoe told Maclain that exit was barred with a bed of white hot coals. Their one chance, remote as it was, lay in the cellar—a chance that the Fire Department would reach them before the house caved in, or that the entrance to the tunnel was more than an imaginative dream of an old Italian.

Maclain stopped long enough to find the pick and toss it down the cellar stairs ahead of them. Another trip up into billowing, choking smoke to get it was impossible. Under Schnucke's guidance, the night-marish descent was accomplished—with Spud's heels clunking hollowly as the captain dragged him down

each step behind him.

He dropped down beside Spud, drinking in great gulps of the cooler basement air, then ran his hands over Schnucke. The smell of singed hair was so strong in his nose that he wondered how the dog had stood it. Cursing softly, he found the binding adhesive tape on Spud and tore it loose, freeing hands, feet and mouth. Much worry departed when he found Spud's breathing regular and his heart strong. He dragged him into the rear of the basement. The roar had crescendoed overhead when Maclain found the place under the flue and started to work with the pick.

He was convinced the tunnel was their last chance. Even if the Fire Department arrived immediately, no one could get to them through the fire-ridden house above.

The heat had become unbearable when the pick broke through. A breath of welcome air, damp and cool, revived Maclain and set him more feverishly to work. His strokes were accurate as a machine, guided by the latent instinct of a North woodsman chopping down a tree, merely a co-ordination of muscles governed by the intangible feel of distance and space.

The hole was a foot in diameter when Spud coughed in back of him. The captain continued his work without stopping, for a warning crackle was loud in the front basement room, and he knew the fire had broken through. Spud groaned and said weakly, "My God, who hit me?" Then added bewilderedly, "What happened, Dunc? And what are you doing now?"

The captain knew that the light from Spud's flashlight had found the hole. "Can you stand?" he asked.

"I guess so." Spud groaned again. "I feel like I'm

burning from head to foot."

"You probably are," said Maclain, "and we'll be roasted completely if we don't get out of here quickly. Can you give me a hand with this hole?"

"It's nearly big enough now," Spud said after a moment. "Here—give me the pick—I'll try it."

Maclain gratefully let go the pick and sat down, encircling his knees with his arms. "The house is blazing over our heads," he said, "and it's through in the front basement already, Spud. What're the chances?"

"We're going through to the next house, or someplace—"

"Not the next house," said Maclain. "There is no next house on that side. I think it's the entrance!"

"I hope it's an exit—not entrance," said Spud. "Come on. We can make it now."

He went through first, but Maclain had to take off Schnucke's harness to get her through the hole. Spud dragged Maclain through after the dog, shredding some of the captain's clothes in the process, but neither of them cared.

They were in a passage not over four feet square. Bent over double, they traversed it for 30 feet, to be stopped by a wall of brick. "We're holed up like a rat." Spud's voice was anguished. "Wait here—I'm going back and get the pick. I stood it up right under the hole where I can reach it." He returned in a minute and pushed Maclain and Schnucke back out of the way. Maclain heard the first powerful stroke and noted the crumpling of brick and mortar.

"There's just a single wall of brick there, Spud," he exclaimed exultantly. "Go to it! I'll put back Schnucke's harness."

Under Spud's frenzied strokes they were through in ten minutes, standing stunned and awed under a cavernous semicircle of brick. It was so dark that the beam of Spud's light seemed feeble as he played it over the ancient arched walls. From overhead came a thunder and rumble, and the wail of powerful sirens dying away. "This is it, all right, Dunc. We've done a marvelous piece of work! We're half burned to death—and Schnucke looks like a Christmas boar's head—or a hairless Spitz. We're in the darkest hole I ever saw in my life—and I've a brain tumor on the top of my head—with no idea in the world how we're going to get out of here. Personally, I think it's just ducky!"

"Listen," said Maclain fervently, "I was conscious in there—and you weren't! Personally, I'd offer up hosannas and praise if we crawled out into a nice cool sewer!"

Chapter Twenty-seven: THE MISSING PIECE

FOR FOUR HOURS a score of sweating, cursing firemen battled the stubborn blaze which threatened to turn into a three-alarm fire. Spud and Maclain could hear the rumbling overhead as additional mammoth apparatus rolled to the scene. Both of them knew the hopelessness of attempting to make themselves heard. Their first search proved beyond a shadow of a doubt how successfully they were entombed. The arched tunnel, still in a remarkable state of preservation, offered neither handhold nor foothold on the unbroken surface of its smooth walls.

To forget the smart of their burns, and with the faint idea in mind that another secret entrance might

reveal itself, they started a systematic scrutiny. Walking slowly, Spud swept his flashlight over ground and walls. At every spot where an irregular contour hinted at a hiding place, Maclain tested with the pick, relying on his keen sense of hearing. They gave it up after a while and sat down to wait for morning.

Nursing his burns, Spud said disgustedly, "Not a sign. I don't think Zarinka was ever in here in his life.—and I don't believe anyone's been in here since Gilbert Fox investigated it in 1916!"

"If anyone has," Maclain agreed sourly, "they took away the old wood-burning engine. At least I'd hoped to run my hands over that before we were through."

"They took the track along, too, Dunc, and ate all the mushrooms."

"Maybe it was the rats," Maclain offered.

"Or the mice."

"Don't mention mice to me, Spud. I feel badly enough now—without bringing *them* up."

Two more hours passed before someone hallooed to them through the breach they had made in the wall.

Cappo, alarmed at their prolonged absence from the car, had phoned Rena. She told him what she knew of their destination. He hurried to the scene, and terror-stricken, had reported to the battalion chief the presence of the two men in the burning house.

The house was gutted out before the chief risked sending men in to search it; then he removed his white helmet and shook his grizzled head despairingly at the mute question in Cappo's eyes. "You've been watching it yourself, big boy. What chance do you think there is of their finding anybody alive in that?" He indicated the steaming, blackened wreck, still be-

ing deluged with water from three lines of hose.

No one was more surprised than the chief when the two men he had sent to search emerged from the smoking heap followed by two stokerlike figures and a horribly dirty mass of singed hair, which the chief finally recognized as a dog.

A waiting ambulance rushed the trio to the nearest hospital, where a night surgeon dressed their burns and pronounced them fit to go home if they wished. Spud declared afterward that Schnucke received much more attention than he or Maclain. She was seized upon immediately by a couple of enthusiastic internes, who decorated her tail with soothing bandages.

Disdainful of wounds, she stuck to her job, proudly wagging her bandaged appendage as she led Maclain to where Cappo had parked the car outside.

The following morning the captain canceled his appointment with Max Gold. It was most necessary that he talk with Chick in the Tombs, but, seized with a terrible reaction, he felt unequal to the task. Schnucke, too, was entitled to a chance for rest and recuperation.

Clad in a suit of thin silk pajamas and a lounging robe, he shut himself up in the office after breakfast, denying admittance to everyone, including Rena and Spud. The pain of his burns was comparatively slight, but he was seized with a black mood of discouragement and despair such as he had not known since the coming of Schnucke.

He lay down on the divan, touched the button of the Capehart, and flooded the room with music. Impatiently he shut it off in the middle of a piece, covered his face with his hands and pressed hard on his sightless eyes. He was a fool, a bungler—a blind man run-

ning through darkness, trying to compete with better men. Filled with overconfidence at his own sagacity, he had plunged recklessly ahead to follow out a wild, fantastic idea—an idea unbacked by the most elementary thinking! What right had a blind man to pit himself against life? What right had he to say, *I'm better, and I know more than those who can see?*

His ego must be vast indeed to take upon himself tasks found hopeless by such men as Davis and Archer. Trained in a school of criminal combat, and backed by the efficiency of the greatest police department in the world, they would never have led Spud into danger for nothing.

Never again would he let the lure of excitement put a knife into the thigh of Spud Savage—and a sharper knife into the heart of Spud Savage's wife.

Bitter anger thrust out its claws, scratching deeply as he thought of the wedged door he had faced the previous night. He had a job to complete, and then he was finished.

He sprang to his feet and walked to his place behind the desk, clapping his hands sharply against his forehead. Everything had an answer. Somewhere, in a welter of murder, politics, and cross-purposes, a shadowy figure was dominating the scene—sending people to their death—mocking at his blindness. "Blindness of the mind," said Duncan Maclain aloud. "Blindness of *my* mind."

He dumped the jigsaw puzzle on the desk before him and spread the pieces flat with an emphatic movement of his hands—so hard that he hurt the burned palm.

One by one he picked them up, feeling, sorting and

turning over—piecing together events. Each piece of wood became a thought. As he felt the place where it belonged, he held it in the other hand until the thought grew clear. When he knew the answer was right, he laid it down and patted it into place.

Where did Chick fit in? Obvious. An honorable man caught in a maelstrom—covering up the brother of the girl he loved by filling up the ugly gap left in her estate.

What place for Hewitt? A perfect place. A jealous man—but not a killer. A killer would have murdered the neurotic nymphomaniac he had interviewed the day before!

Gilbert Fox? An engineer, but a dreamer. Handsome—but a philanderer only as dreamers philander. There was no material for murder there.

Trilby and Shane? Two pieces of the puzzle fitted together to make one. The one piece followed such an irregular pattern it shouldn't be difficult to place. Black-mailers. The scum of the private detectives, with one god—*money*.

Then why did Hewitt hire them?

Maclain reached for the phone, called the the Department of Gas, Water and Electricity, and asked for Hewitt. Brushing aside the engineer's proffered sympathy and congratulations, Maclain asked quickly, "Why did you hire Trilby and Shane?"

"They were recommended to me by the headwaiter at Benny Hoefle's club."

"Why?" persisted Maclain.

"Because I'd made inquiries from him"—Hewitt's voice reflected sadness and despair—"about my wife."

After he hung up, Maclain twisted the joined pieces

of wood around, then laid them to one side. A firm like Trilby and Shane stopped at nothing—for a price—and the headwaiter at the Hi-de-Ho had recommended them to Hewitt. That meant that Hoefle knew them well.

It was part of their business to get things on crooks—things that could be used—but the puzzle had a flaw, a weakness—the weakness of Trilby and Shane: they were yellow.

“Yellow,” Maclain whispered and fitted the two pieces into place. “Yellow men hire thugs to beat up defenseless men—and sometimes defenseless men, like Tom Delancey, die.”

He reached for the phone again to get Inspector Davis. When the conversation was ended, he leaned back and sighed. Davis told him two things. The first concerned Chick’s account with Ludlows’. The second was about Amy Arden. She had gone to work for Hoefle six weeks after Tom Delancey’s death. Amy Arden had been Tom Delancey’s mistress.

Another piece was in place, touching on every side—touching with Benny Hoefle to get revenge; touching with Paul Zarinka, who could give it to her; touching with Howard Hewitt, because through fear she’d been forced to lie—when her death was already on the cards.

The center of the puzzle was complete but for a single piece—one which always annoyed Maclain. It defied him, because it lacked distinguishing angles. Its very smoothness to the touch made it similar to many others. Whenever he felt it, mentally he said, *Too perfect.*

He picked it up and held it long before his sightless

eyes.

Too perfect, he said almost aloud, but his mind was on the dying words of Paul Zarinka.

Paul Zarinka was saying something—something so obvious—something so clear that it was hard to fit in place. Hard to fit in place like the murderous hand which three times had struck without warning. Desperately difficult to allocate, like the murderous mind which knew everything before it was done. Had Galligan understood Zarinka? Maclain's lips formed the words he had repeated so many times: "Sea Beach Subway—the last express!"

It was so close and so clear that all of them had missed it—missed it as they missed the obvious presence of the killer they were seeking.

"Sea Beach Subway," repeated Maclain and patted the piece into its proper hole.

He knew where Paul Zarinka had hidden the evidence and the money—and knew further who had killed him for his pains.

Chapter Twenty-eight: A SMART PAIR

MACLAIN's postponed appointment with Max Gold to interview Chick in the Tombs was for nine o'clock the following morning. Still solicitous of Schnucke's burns, he had called a Park Avenue veterinary to attend her. The doctor advised a few days of rest.

Maclain, forced into what he called temporary blindness through Schnucke's incapacity, telephoned Evelyn Zarinka a request to accompany him to the Tombs.

She arrived at the penthouse early, and Cappel drove them downtown.

The energetic Max was already there. He pursed his lips at Maclain's smooth appearance and swept off a \$100 panama as he took Evelyn's hand.

"I know you're anxious to talk with Mr. Hartshorn, Miss Zarinka, but I'm going to have to ask you to wait."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Perhaps I shouldn't have come."

"Blame it on me, Mr. Gold," said Maclain. "I pressed her into guide duty. My dog—"

"Yes, I heard," Gold interrupted sympathetically. "Your chauffeur pushed everything but you and the tunnels out of the newspapers when he told that battalion chief you and Mr. Savage were inside the building. It was most unfortunate."

"For many reasons," Maclain agreed. "It was an expedition I hoped to keep secret. Since it was fruitless, I suppose it doesn't matter."

"Shall we go?" Max Gold looked at his watch. "You can wait here if you don't mind, Miss Zarinka. We won't be long, and I'll send for you."

"Thank you." Evelyn took a chair and watched Max Gold lead Maclain away. Her faith in the two men was strong but not quite strong enough to mitigate a touch of claustrophobia at her drab surroundings. With Chick incarcerated on a murder charge, she was numbed to inaction. Ordinarily, she would have protested vigorously against any delay in seeing the man she loved. Instead, she found herself obeying Max Gold's slightest suggestion with the docility of a listless child. She felt he was her only hope of ever being restored to normal again.

Guided by Max Gold's friendly hand on his elbow, Maclain followed a stolid officer through a clanging

gate to a small interview room. There he and the attorney waited ten minutes on hard chairs until Chick was admitted.

The captain saw none of the havoc the Tombs had wrought in his friend's appearance, but the flatness of Chick's voice and the bitter tenor of his speech proclaimed it more vividly than sight.

"Where's Evelyn?" Chick asked without a greeting. More than 48 dismally dragging hours of prison had stripped him of formalities.

"I asked her to wait outside."

"Why can't I see her?" Chick became petulant. "I've been questioned until I'm sick—there's nothing more I can tell."

"Well, then, let me talk," said Max, dripping honey. "I've some good news for you."

"I'm to be released?" Chick's eagerness stabbed at Maclain.

"I'm afraid I can't promise that immediately," Max told him, "but I've uncovered some important facts through the police."

Chick's monosyllabic "Oh" was once more dead with disinterest.

"They've traced the man who leased the office in your name—the man who traded as you with Ludlow Brothers, using that address. They've also found a girl who worked for him up until a short time ago. The man was your fiancée's brother!"

"You call that good news?" Chick asked dully. "It's a lie on the face of it. Another lie—hatched up by Dearborn and the police to make their case more secure. Why should Paul do a thing like that?"

"We came here to find out," said Maclain.

"And I expected more than that from you, Dunc," Chick protested heatedly. "Such a statement presumes that I know."

"You said a moment ago that you had told all you could," Max reminded him. "Are you sure you shouldn't have amended that to 'I've told all I *will*'?" He became soothing. "Miss Zarinka employed me to defend you. I'm trying to do so, but you're making it most difficult. It's considered not an unusual prerogative of a defense attorney to be able to question his client to a reasonable degree. Do you object to that?"

The room was silent, then Maclain heard the squeak of a chair as Chick straightened up.

"I object to being hounded to death, Mr. Gold—by you or anyone else. I considered Captain Maclain my best friend—until he grew so ethical in the Hi-de-Ho Club that I thought he'd been appointed assistant district attorney!"

Maclain flushed with momentary anger but refrained from speaking.

Chick continued, "Now that you know where I stand, go ahead and ask what questions you want."

"Wait." Maclain stood up "Now that I know where you stand, I don't want to ask any questions."

"But Captain," Max Gold put in placatingly, "I don't think Mr. Hartshorn meant—"

Maclain's manner froze the appeal. "I'm quite able to judge what your client meant, Mr. Gold. I've known him many years longer than you. I allow lots of things to pass, but when I'm accused of violation of friendship, I fight back. Since Chick has intimated that I'm working for the D. A., then the quicker we dig out the true facts of this case, the better."

He walked to the door, flung it open, and said to the officer he knew was standing outside, "Please send for Miss Zarinka to come at once. She's waiting in the reception room."

He returned to his place at the table and stood behind his chair. Max Gold took off his hat and began to fan himself.

"I'm about ready to wash my hands of this myself, Mr. Hartshorn."

Chick hunched down in his chair, stared sullenly at the little lawyer, and said,

"Wash and be damned!"

He was still sitting in the same position when Evelyn entered. He rose to his feet, and neither Maclain nor Gold spoke during the long moment Chick held her in his arms. When she sat down, the tenseness of the situation was apparent.

The three men present wore expressions far too uncompromising to be ignored.

She finally asked tremulously,

"What's the matter?"

Chick set his mouth stubbornly and said, "Ask them."

"Please." She put a hand on Maclain's arm. He sat down and pulled the chair close to the table.

Bluntly he asked, "Would you prefer to find your dead brother had embezzled your estate and lost it in speculation—and that Charles Hartshorn was alive to marry and comfort you? Or would you rather see Charles Hartshorn go to the electric chair, leaving you a wealthy woman—with the memory of your brother unbesmirched?"

Even the indomitable Max Gold whitened at Eve-

lyn's anguish:

"Chick!" she said weakly. "Oh, Chick, tell me what he means."

"Just a minute." Max Gold leaned forward and placed a hand over Evelyn's cold one on the table. "I think perhaps Captain Maclain is the only one who can tell us what he means."

"I think perhaps you're right, Mr. Gold," Maclain continued. "There's hardly a necessity to ask Chick questions about something I already know." Commiseratingly he turned his head toward the girl. "At the expense of forfeiting Chick's friendship, Miss Zarinka, I'm going to try to save his life. He's acting like a foolish child. Apparently he has no realization of the impersonal thing we call law. Your brother looted your estate, Miss Zarinka, of at least \$130,000—I don't know how much more. But your estate is still intact today: \$170,000 of it was replaced by bribe money your brother received from Benny Hoefle to suppress evidence against him. The other \$130,000 Charles Hartshorn deposited to your brother's account in the bank: shortly after nine Tuesday morning. Your brother had died the night before. Chick placed it there to cover a deficit of that amount."

"That's a lie," Chick declared gratingly. "Don't believe him, Evelyn. That money was to repay a loan Paul made me. I deposited it before I had seen the papers—before you called me to say that Paul was dead."

"Now we're getting some place," said Max Gold. "So you did put that money into Paul Zarinka's account?"

"Yes," Chick admitted miserably. "I deposited it."

What of it? It was to repay a loan."

"I'm afraid not," Maclain continued implacably. "Paul Zarinka had borrowed from you before. Never you from him! You gave him a check for \$80,000 months ago. With your check, and using your name, he opened that account at Ludlow Brothers. One of the partners called him 'Mr. Hartshorn'—and that gave birth to the idea of trading in your name. He recouped some of his losses and returned the money to you."

Chick cracked under the strain of Maclain's calm statements. Hardly able to speak against the huskiness in his voice, he said, "I tried to keep it from you, Evelyn. Paul exchanged checks with me for \$80,000—as Dunc says. Mine was drawn to 'Cash' at his request. I had only one idea in mind—to protect you. He came to see me the night he was killed and wanted to exchange checks again—for \$130,000. I didn't have that much available but promised him I'd get it the next day. He swore his own check would be good within forty-eight hours—that it was a matter of bookkeeping—just to keep the audit straight. Tuesday morning I borrowed on some bonds and anonymously made the deposit—but I did not know he was dead. The money meant nothing to me—against your happiness."

"It means nothing to me," said Evelyn as she came around the table to him, "against yours. I loved Paul so much that I can forgive him anything. Don't you see how wrong you were? If his actions brought harm to you, I'd hate his memory as long as I lived!"

As Maclain and Gold walked down the corridor together, leaving Evelyn and Chick behind, Maclain asked,

"Where did you get that information about Paul Zarinka being identified as the renter of the office in Hartshorn's name?"

Max tightened his grip on the captain's elbow. "Where did you get your information about Chick Hartshorn's deposit to Paul Zarinka's account—and the fact that Zarinka was looting the estate?"

"It really wasn't information I had," admitted MacLain. "I just figured that it had to be so."

"Well," said Max briskly, "I just figured mine out, too. Working together, we're a damn smart pair!"

Chapter Twenty-nine: THE TIME CHARTS

RENA AND SPUD had not been idle while MacLain was at the Tombs. He had left them both one of his carefully typed sheets of instructions. Before leaving the prison he made two calls—one to Gilbert Fox at the New York Electric; the other to Howard Hewitt. Both men lunched with him at Luchow's on 14th Street and agreed to meet at MacLain's office at four o'clock, bringing certain information and plans he requested.

Spud was waiting for him when he returned home after lunch. The captain told him what had transpired during the morning's interview and added the information that Hewitt and Fox would be up later in the afternoon.

Spud made an attempt to look severe under his ludicrous-appearing, singed eyebrows. "As I recall it," he said, "Mr. Gilbert Valentino Fox was responsible for the hunch that took us down into that railroad tomb in Brooklyn. Do I err in saying that one more hunch like that is apt to serve us both up with par-

sley?"

The captain forced a smile. Spud had verbally touched a wound badly healed.

"You err when you mention hunches, Spud," he said a trifle primly. "I've played my last. We're going down—"

"Heaven forbid!" Spud groaned. "I knew it! The next city I live in is New Orleans—it's so wet underneath the ground they have to bury their dead on top."

"You have a right to kid all you want to, Spud. This time I'm right. I know where Paul Zarinka hid the \$130,000 in cash and the evidence to send Benny Hoefle to the chair."

Spud's lightness vanished. He was quick to recognize the seriousness of Maclain's statement. Instantly he was alert and eager for more.

"What happened night before last was my fault, Dunc—not yours. You can make all the attempts you want to to take the blame off of me—I know the truth, see. I know who got us into that mess through lack of watchfulness and being asleep on the job. I know whose courage and cleverness got me out alive. I try to cover up the deepest feeling of shame I ever had by being funny—funny because I was afraid you'd lost confidence in me."

"Then we're quits, Spud." There was a catch in Maclain's throat. "We've fought the first real fear in the past two days that's ever cropped up since we've been together. It's strange, isn't it, Spud, that we two should ever be afraid of each other! You see, I've been nursing the same thing—I was desperately afraid that you'd lost confidence in *me*. I'm glad we can forget it."

"So am I"—for a moment Spud's yellow eyes were

sightless as Maclain's—"but if you want somebody to walk up through the Croton Viaduct in a diver's suit tonight, just let me know."

"Thanks," said Maclain. "Now that we've restored each other to good standing, what did you find out this morning?"

"Most of what you asked, Dunc." Spud took a notebook from his pocket. "Rena hasn't had a chance to make you a record, but here's the gist of it." He thumbed over pages. "The grenade exploded in Zarinka's car at 10:12. Patrolman Galligan lifted Zarinka out of the wreckage at 10:14. Zarinka said 'Sea Beach Subway—the last express,' and died at 10:15. Davis and Archer and three other members of the Homicide Squad arrived on the scene at 10:25. Rindermann and Dilks of the Auto Squad arrived on the scene at 10:30. An officer named Evans phoned Dearborn's apartment at 10:30. Dearborn was at a meeting at Tammany Hall at Union Square. The call was relayed there. Springer drove him down and he arrived at 10:45."

The captain tapped restlessly on the arm of his chair. "You checked that with Claude?"

"Or the other way about," said Spud. "Dearborn gave me the approximate time he was called and the name of the officer who called him. I checked it with Davis. He wasn't inclined to talk until he found out I already had the information."

"What about the headwaiter at the Hi-de-Ho?"

"The price was five bucks. Trilby and Shane hang around the club—with an eye for pretty wives airing themselves with wrong husbands. The headwaiter's a Frenchman, slicker than Boule de Suif—but for five bucks he admitted he recommended the pair to Hew-

itt."

"Then he knew Hewitt pretty well?"

"He must have, but he didn't remember Hewitt being there Monday night."

"He was sure he wasn't there?"

"He remembered Mrs. Hewitt being alone in booth four."

"Why?"

"She got a phone call."

"Mmmm." Maclain rocked back and forth in his chair. "So did Dearborn—right after Amy Arden passed out at our table. He'd gone for the doctor. In the excitement I forgot to tell him."

"That was Tuesday night, wasn't it?" Spud asked.

"That's right," said Maclain. "Why?"

"I just wanted to mark down the date in my notebook," Spud remarked carelessly. "That's the first thing I ever knew you to forget in twenty years!"

"What about Galligan?" Maclain ignored Spud's trial balloon.

"His story's stereotyped by now."

"Did you see his notebook?"

"Yes. The price was another five bucks—it seems to be standard—and it wasn't worth it."

"Then nothing struck you odd about what he'd written down?"

"Only his handwriting—it was terrible." Spud paused and asked with curiosity, "What would?"

"I thought that nothing would," said Maclain. "Things are beginning to run true to form."

"You're beginning to run true to form," Spud declared, "in keeping things to yourself."

"It's time I did, Spud. You checked the entrances

to the Hi-de-Ho, didn't you?"

"Wednesday, with Archer. Hoefle owns houses on both sides of the club, but they don't connect with it. We covered the house from cellar to roof."

"I'll take your word for that." Maclain looked pleased. "Then anyone leaving would have had to go out by the front door?"

"Unless they slipped out the back while Archer and I were walking the block with Madonna."

"A good point," Maclain commended, "but unimportant. Madonna made his escape and was caught by you after the excitement broke. I'm interested in knowing who went in and out *before* the excitement broke. Did you question the doorman?"

"No luck. He's dumb and says hundreds of people go in and out every night."

"Sometimes I regret the passing of the speakeasies, Spud. We never had any trouble checking who went in and out of them."

"He did remember Dearborn asking for the nearest doctor," continued Spud.

"Did you check that with Claude, too?"

"Yes—and with Dr. Saraz."

Maclain nodded. "I heard your report on Saraz yesterday. He and the medical examiner seem to agree pretty closely. The medical examiner evidently made a careful note of the progress of post-mortem lividity and rigor mortis during the night. At that, he didn't come much closer than Saraz. I'm hunting for minutes. Spud."

"I judged that," said Spud dryly, "since you had me pushing a stop watch at split seconds. What are you driving at, Dunc?"

"Proof of guilt in the most carefully planned murder I've ever heard of," Maclain declared. "Proof of the guilt of a murderer who took everything into consideration—including time, place and weather! It makes it doubly difficult, Spud, when you add a 'break' to methodical prearrangement. Through your painstaking reports on time and color I was able to develop the film. I couldn't make the final print until I added the weather."

Maclain leaned back, placed both hands on top of his head, and linked his fingers together. Spud urged him on with a single question.

"The weather?"

"The rain," said Maclain. "Amy Arden couldn't have been successfully murdered without the rain. She couldn't have been successfully murdered unless I was blind. She couldn't have been successfully murdered without the floor show. Particularly necessary was the 'Dance of the Inferno.' Still her slayer wasn't satisfied. Cleverly devised messages brought together at the Hide-Ho Club every likely person who could have had the remotest desire to kill that girl or Paul. He arranged it on an afternoon when the weather reports assured a steady downpour for the evening—on an afternoon when the weather itself gave every evidence of bearing out the reports. He *had* to have the rain, Spud. A man can't walk out of a night club on a steaming hot night wearing a coat to hide bloodstains unless it's pouring rain. He had to have my blindness—for he stabbed Amy Arden while she was seated at the table with me. Do you see, Spud, he knew that under the shock of Paul Zarinka's death Amy Arden would turn immediately to the solace of the marihuanas which had

her in their grip. Amy Arden, Spud, was killed twenty minutes, more or less, before the competent Miss Patricia Kellogg screamed out Chick's guilt."

Spud left his chair and began to pace the room. He crossed it three times before he said with finality, "That's impossible, Dunc. Why, the waiters—the girls in the chorus"—he started to wave his hands—"half the chorus passed by within three feet of your table! The girl had a knife in her back—and her white satin dress was soaked with blood! You're not trying to tell me she sat there for twenty minutes in that condition and was never noticed! Miss Kellogg saw her from clear across the dance floor the instant—" Spud stopped his pacing and turned to look at Maclain's face.

The captain was inscrutable. "Go on, Spud," he said. "Finish what you started to say—Miss Kellogg noticed Amy Arden instantly *when?*"

"When the lights came up," Spud spoke softly. "My gosh, Dunc—"

"Now sit down for a minute and quit raving. There've been lots of things right under your nose that haven't been seen. The light chart made for me by Fred Schmidt proved that some of them *couldn't* be seen. Rena's transcription of that chart, Spud, told me what I wanted to know. The 'Dance of the Inferno' lasts twenty-three minutes. During the dance, the lights on the floor are constantly changing—but mounted at each corner of the dance floor, Spud, is a battery of floodlights which never change during the entire dance. The battery from the opposite corner shone directly on the table where I was sitting. The small handle of the knife in Amy Arden's back was almost concealed by the center of a white satin bow which

held the shoulder straps of her décolleté dress together. That bow was soaked with blood. The whiteness of her back was stained with blood—but nobody noticed it, Spud, for Amy Arden was bathed in something far redder than blood—the rays from the battery of lights diagonally across the dance floor. Nobody noticed her, Spud, because you can't see blood on a white dress under a blood-red light!"

Chapter Thirty: THE SEA BEACH EXPRESS

RENA had spent the entire morning in research. Dirty, but triumphant, she returned to the office while Spud and Maclain were talking. With the aid of two attendants she had pulled down newspapers from high-up shelves in the Public Library—papers yellow with age, tatterdemalion and begrimed.

Gingerly turning their disintegrating pages—sorting dates in accordance with Maclain's list—she had gradually filled a notebook with pertinent facts about underground New York.

There was no time to commit them to the Ediphone before the arrival of Hewitt and Fox. She briefly outlined her findings to the captain and Spud, then hurried through a bath and a bite of lunch. The two engineers were announced before she finished eating. Hastily she swallowed her remaining half cup of coffee, greeted them at the automatic elevator, and ushered them into the office.

Gilbert Fox was carrying a paper-wrapped, cylindrical package. When greetings were exchanged, he tore it open and spread a heavy roll of blueprints flat on Maclain's desk. He started to point to something,

then, looking abashed, he stopped. Rena suppressed a smile, but Spud laughed openly and said, "I guess you'd better let me look at those, Mr. Fox."

Maclain placed one hand on top of the blueprints. "If you don't mind, Spud, I asked Mr. Fox to bring these to me. I'd like to have them left on my desk while we're discussing things. I'm afraid these are rather too cryptic for the layman to understand, anyhow. You see. I find myself in the peculiar situation of knowing, and yet not knowing, a hiding place. I may be able to get the answer, or part of it, from these plans—where even trained engineers like Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Fox have failed. Rena, before we get into this too deeply I think all of us could do with a highball."

Rena slid back a panel in the corner of the room, disclosing a buffet bar, took ice from the small electric refrigerator within, and began to prepare the drinks. The captain's hands moved in a soft caress over the surface of the top plan. Hewitt, watching uncomprehendingly, remarked, "The first batch is of the Independent Subway."

"Yes, I know," said Maclain abstractedly.

"But—" Hewitt began.

The incredulity of the single word distracted the captain for a moment and brought a smile to his face. "The seal of the engineers, and the date, is stamped in the corner, Mr. Hewitt. Not only do I read Braille with my fingers, but I'm fairly good at ordinary letters when they're raised. Honestly—I'm not trying to show off. Sometimes I just forget—you see I know the names of the engineers who designed the subway and the date it was built. Is it strange that I know to which subway the plans belong?"

"Yes," said Hewitt decisively, "it's still strange to me, but I'll certainly hand it to you."

When the drinks were served around, Maclain raised his glass and said, "I'm going to drink to our success tonight." He took a couple of swallows and set it down. "We're engaged in one of the most unusual quests I ever heard of—a quest for a tunnel even more legendary than the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel in Brooklyn! It begins with Paul Zarinka's interest in tunnels and the many months of research he spent on the subject. I've been drawn into an investigation which forced me to get the same amount of information in a very short time."

Maclain slowly leafed over the blueprints before him as he talked, sliding his fingers gently over each one, front and back. "Both of you said at luncheon today that Paul Zarinka had examined these plans, did you not?"

"That's right," Fox declared. "He spent hours over the ones of ours you have there. Of course, they haven't much to do with the subway. All those tunnels are filled with wires and cables—millions of miles of them. You may know, Captain, that there're over sixty thousand manholes leading underground in this city. They give access for our men, the telephone company's, the New York Steam's, the gas company's—and to city employees who check up on water and sewerage."

"Is it dangerous to go down in those?" Maclain asked him.

"Not particularly. Of course, we use a 'mechanical nose' which detects any gas instantly and tells us what kind it is."

"The gas company has a big emergency service, too,"

Hewitt added. "Their men in the green helmets attend every fire."

"Then one thing stands to reason," said Maclain emphatically. "White mice were found in Paul Zarinka's car. He had either been in—or was going in—a tunnel which he thought might contain poisonous gas. That would be one of the tunnels shown on the New York Electric plans, wouldn't it, Mr. Fox? It certainly wouldn't be a subway regularly used by the public."

"That's correct," said Fox. "But white mice wouldn't do a man much good if he carried them down a manhole into a gas pocket."

"Maybe he lowered them down," Spud suggested.

"That point's caused me plenty of thought, Spud," the captain admitted. "I've tried to pick a New York street deserted enough for a man to pick off a manhole cover and stand and lower and raise a cage of white mice without being seen. There probably are such streets in New York—but the method doesn't fit in—either with facility or with Paul Zarinka's natural cautiousness. Point number two is that not a piece of rope or string was found in or around the wreckage of Paul Zarinka's car nor on his person."

"What does that leave you?" Spud asked after a moment.

"Again it leaves us the obvious," said Maclain. "A door. Somewhere, in New York City, Paul Zarinka found a door which entered into a conduit. The danger of gas was in that conduit. Before he entered he opened the door a crack, placed the mice inside, then five minutes later opened the door and took them out. If they were all right, he went on in."

Hewitt's voice trembled with excitement. "There're

ten thousand such doors under the street in New York, Captain Maclain. Access doors. They lead from the subways into conduits, and from conduits into passages running under the buildings—but you've tackled a hopeless task."

"Nothing's hopeless," Maclain said flatly.

"This is hopeless," Hewitt declared. "I'll leave it to Mr. Fox. Why, the tunnels under New York have become so complicated that trained engineers have ceased long ago to attempt to use blueprints. Half the time we're dependent on borings to find out what's underneath the street. There's not a living man familiar with the intricacies of the system. It's outgrown them all."

"He's right, Captain," Fox affirmed. "There're four levels of traffic underground at Herald Square." He started to enumerate: "The B. M. T. Subway is right under the street. Under that are the Hudson-Manhattan tubes. Then comes the 6th Avenue Subway. And underneath there are the tunnels of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which run under the East River to Long Island. Holy Moses," he exclaimed, struck by a sudden thought, "you don't think Zarinka used the Sixth Avenue Subway for a hiding place!"

Maclain sat frozen at his desk. Out of the stack before him he had picked two blueprints and was holding one in each hand. "Strangely enough, Mr. Fox," he said, as though addressing an unseen audience with his mind entirely occupied with the text of his speech, "it's not the newest subway in New York I'm seeking. It's the oldest!"

"That's the Interborough," Hewitt declared confidently. "It was finished in 1904 and ran from 96th

Street down to South Ferry, crossing over from Times Square to Grand Central on 42d Street." He snapped his fingers. "Now there's a real possibility, Captain Maclain. A lot of that old track at Grand Central Station is closed up and out of use today. They run a shuttle train across, but it doesn't go all the way. There're a million hiding places in there—and they're accessible, too!"

"A million hiding places," Maclain repeated, "but not the right one—and the I. R. T., Mr. Hewitt, is not New York's oldest subway. It was antedated by thirty-five years. A brilliant man wrecked his life and his fortune in a futile attempt to prove that someday more than seventeen hundred million people would ride underground in a single year! That someday under the streets of New York there would be enough track to carry a train from New York to Chicago! He built the first subway in order to prove his contention that such a thing was feasible, and he ran a train in it, too—an express train, Mr. Hewitt, for the subway ran but a single block, from Murray to Warren. It ran through a brick tube eight feet in diameter under a motive power of compressed air!"

Maclain laid the two blueprints down on top of his desk—one overlapping the other. The thick paper crinkled abnormally loud in the silent office. "Paul Zarinka found what was left of that subway—built in 1870. Has anyone ever made tracings of these plans, Mr. Fox—these plans or the conduits around City Hall Park?"

Fox shook his head and said:

"Never—to my knowledge. They're a private set of my own."

"What about this plan—of the downtown B. M. T. Subway on lower Broadway?" Maclain asked Hewitt.

"Never." Hewitt was emphatic. "Those plans are my personal property—given to me by the Board of Transportation. They aid me in my work with the Department of Gas, Water and Electricity."

"But Zarinka saw them?"

"Yes," said Hewitt, "he did."

"And he traced them," said Maclain. "You gentlemen are both engineers—you'll find a full set of drawing equipment in Mrs. Savage's office which adjoins this room. Tracings have been made of these two plans of approximately eight square inches in the section surrounding City Hall Park. Superimposed one on the other, I think we can find how Paul Zarinka discovered the place I've tried so hard to locate." Maclain wet his lips and sadly shook his head. "He left word where it was before he died. The last thing he said."

"What do you mean, Dunc?" Spud asked unsteadily. "Zarinka said 'Sea Beach Subway—the last express.' The Sea Beach Subway runs out to Brooklyn."

"You two engineers will appreciate the irony," answered Maclain. "It's more than strange that the name of the pioneer of New York's entire system of transportation should be so completely forgotten—but it is forgotten—yet it lives again in the subways of today! Small round signs hang by the track in the Times Square Station of the B. M. T. Millions read them every night as they pour underground at Forty-second Street on their way home to Brooklyn. The words on those little round signs sound the same as the last words of Paul Zarinka—'Sea Beach Express'—but the meaning is not the same, although we can hardly

blame Officer Galligan and the rest of us for confusing something so remote with something so near at hand. Paul Zarinka's last words were: 'See Beach's subway—the last express'—the only express ever run in 1870, for one short block under Broadway. Galligan, not unnaturally, changed an 'e' to an 'a'—and Paul's *precise* instruction became nothing more than a subway train running to Brooklyn! You can see plainly now, Spud, what wasn't plain to me at all—the name of the man who built New York's first subway was Beach!"

Chapter Thirty-one: BAITING THE TRAP

THE engineers of 1897 made a real innovation when they considered shooting the U. S. mail from one part of New York to another in underground tubes. Their system is still good. Daily over 6,000,000 letters are propelled up and down the island through 28 miles of pneumatic air tubes. Enclosed half a thousand to a batch in 28-pound metal torpedoes, they make a speed of 30 miles an hour, undisturbed by the congested traffic overhead.

None of the engineers who designed them could have pictured in his wildest dreams the buried congestion of conveyors which have since encompassed the mail tubes. There was no picture in their minds of over 36,000 miles of electric wires, 50 miles of steam pipe, 4,200 miles of water mains, and 3,000 miles of sewers. The smartest of them could scarcely have conceived a single city with over 1,500,00 telephones requiring 10,000,000 miles of underground wire to serve them—so many miles of wire that, placed on telephone poles

overhead, it would shut out a sight of the sky.

It was into such a welter of wire, pipes, tracks and tubes that Duncan Maclain planned to go in search of Beach's subway. It was a tribute to the confidence the man inspired in those who knew him that Gilbert Fox and Howard Hewitt agreed to go along.

They were trained engineers, more familiar than Maclain with the hazardous complexities of his contemplated task.

Rena, at Maclain's request, typed the information she had gleaned from her morning's search. Hewitt, Fox and Spud digested it carefully, reading it aloud to Maclain.

The newspaper accounts of 1870 were lavish enough in a fractious vein. Actual data which might have proved useful in locating the remnants of Beach's tunnel was sparse and inaccurate.

Hewitt and Fox smiled grimly at the printed statements quoting leading engineers of Beach's day—airing erudite opinions that New York's streets could never be tunneled; that monstrous buildings, five stories high, would cave in immediately and crash in chaotic destruction. Only one editorial writer was sympathetic: some unknown man with keenness and vision enough to see the scope of Beach's idea. In closing he said:

Mr. Beach has undertaken a hopeless task—not to run trains beneath the streets of New York, which will someday be crowded beyond endurance, but to battle the undefeatable army of public ignorance—to crash his brilliant mind hopelessly against the blank, unscalable wall of suspicion and misunderstanding. To prove that someday speeding trains will run north under Broadway and Madison Avenue, and even dip beneath the waters of the Harlem River, Mr. Beach con-

structed his sample tube from Murray Street to Warren Street. The trial run of his train was eminently successful, but, despite its success, our great engineering minds say "No." New York has seen its first underground express train. For Mr. Beach, who conceived it, it may be the last express. Is it the last this city will ever see? This writer says "No!"

Hewitt, who read the editorial aloud, laid it down.

"I'll bet Zarinka saw that, too," said Spud.

"It's quite possible," Maclain agreed. "There's a hopeless finality about the 'last express' which may have stuck in his mind, but we'll know the truth tonight. Can any of you think of anything we've overlooked?"

"A canary," said Fox. "They're better than mice as gas detectors—more sensitive."

Spud was thoughtful.

"I wonder why Zarinka didn't use them instead of mice."

"Mice don't sing," said Maclain. "It might prove awkward if you were trying to conceal yourself from a policeman and a canary you were carrying with you burst into song. Send Cappel out to get one," he told Rena. "There's a pet shop at 74th and Broadway. Tell him not to come back here with a birdcage as big as a barrel—we want it in a small wooden one such as they use for shipping. He'd better hurry, too. They'll be closing soon."

The two engineers refused Maclain's cordial invitation to remain for dinner. Maclain was taking no more chances on failure. He had typed written instructions covering their procedure for Spud, Hewitt and Fox, and had made two additional copies for Dearborn and Springer, who were to join him downtown later in the evening.

Hewitt and Fox had several hours of work ahead. Paul Zarinka had traced from the blueprints belonging to Howard Hewitt a short section of the B. M. T. Subway south of City Hall Park, and from the New York Electric Company's conduit plan he had taken a similar section.

Rena's excerpts from the newspapers of 1912 told where diggers for the B. M. T. Subway had found a segment of Beach's tunnel. It was a brick tube, eight feet in diameter. Gilbert Fox immediately suggested that Zarinka had found some underground passage into it from the basement of the Woolworth Building.

The captain did not agree. It was true the 60-story Woolworth Building had many subbasements below ground, but the Woolworth Building was carefully planned. With all its intricacies known, Maclain considered it an unlikely place for exploration.

He had set Hewitt and Fox the task of investigating and listing all the pedestrian passageways under Broadway, between Warren and Murray streets. Many of the older buildings ran down two or three stories. The passages crowded with pedestrians during the day were not closed up at night and were practically deserted.

"If you can find some such passage," Maclain told them, "with an access door in a secluded spot, I think we have a starting point for our search."

Fox and Hewitt left before six. Spud, Rena and Maclain dined in silence. The captain was much too pre-occupied to talk.

Usually lavish in his praise of Sarah Marsh's cooking, he ate one of his favorite dishes, a delectable broiled bluefish, without comment.

The near catastrophe in Brooklyn was too close to

Rena. She found herself unable to add much buoyancy to the meal and kept stealing covert glances at the eyebrowless Maclain and her plucked-appearing husband. Nothing in her manner indicated how much out of sympathy she was with the proposed search.

She knew that Dearborn had employed the captain for a specific purpose and that Maclain was bending all his energies to free the D. A. from a political trap. That failed to satisfy her.

She could not help but feel that apprehension of the person responsible for murder and arson was more important.

The captain's best friend was in jail, and the brunt of freeing him rested squarely on Maclain. As much as Rena admired Davis and Archer, she realized their limitations. With a first-class case against Charles Hartshorn, the police were more than apt to sit back and rest quietly on their official heels.

She felt Spud was chafing under the same idea, although he was far too loyal to the captain to give a hint of it. Piqued beyond endurance, she finally excused herself and left the table.

Abstracted as he was, the brusqueness of her "Excuse me, please—I'm really not hungry," did not pass Maclain.

He reached out a staying hand as she rose. "You don't think I'm doing much, do you, Rena—prowling around tunnels looking for money and papers when I should be man-hunting? Don't let it worry you—please. If we're successful tonight, there'll be no more murders—and Chick will be out of jail long before Max Gold has to defend him at a trial."

Rena smiled, reassured in spite of herself. "You're a

trying man, Duncan," she said. "Now and again, any woman likes to have a chance to think her own thoughts in private."

Evelyn Zarinka was announced shortly after half-past seven. It seemed impossible to her that less than a week had passed since her first visit to the penthouse. She had relaxed a trifle since morning, and Maclain was quick to note the change brought about by a better understanding of Chick.

"How did you leave him?" he asked her when she was seated. "I was sorry to take the car away from you, but it's essential for my transportation with Schnucke on the hospital list."

"I understand perfectly, Captain Maclain. I came up to tell you how grateful I am—really, Chick and I understand each other much better than before. I know he meant well—but his very secretiveness in trying to keep Paul's actions from me had raised a barrier between us."

"He's a wonderful boy, Miss Zarinka. I believe it's Chick's little streak of old-fashioned ethics that I admire so much. I wish I could have given him more hope this morning. Unfortunately it was necessary for me to antagonize him to get information which might hasten his freedom."

"Oh, I knew you were making every effort. I told him so, Captain Maclain. Mr. Gold's a splendid attorney—but I don't want that kind of freedom for Chick. He shouldn't have to face the ordeal of a trial. Tell me the truth—won't you, please? Be frank with me. I have to know! Will he be there long?"

Maclain appeared to be gazing past her into an indecipherable future. Many slow, long minutes passed

before he answered.

"The greatest danger faced by Chick, Miss Zarinka, is the danger that I'll move too hastily for his good. Do I need to tell you the difficulty of my task—when even you, who love him, have felt the wrench of doubtful moments?"

"I never thought—" she began.

"Yet, along with the others," Maclain interrupted her, "you were forced to believe the evidence of your eyes. I have no eyes, Miss Zarinka; therefore I am surer of Chick's innocence than you. I know the man who killed Paul Zarinka—the man who murdered Amy Arden—"

"You know—" she gasped. "Then why don't you act, Captain Maclain? The police—the district attorney—anyone—anything—"

"I've already told you of the danger. It lies in people like you, Miss Zarinka—people who can see—who are ready to swear Chick's life away and believe they are telling the truth. Pit my story against theirs: I claim Amy Arden was murdered fifteen or twenty minutes before Chick came to my table. The blood on her back and dress was hidden—merged in a blood-red floodlight which shone on her from the opposite corner of the dance floor. The murderer left the Hi-de-Ho Club wearing a raincoat to hide the bloodstains, if any, on his clothes! They would be visible, you know, when he left the red glow for the white lights in the reception hall. That's the word of a blind man, Miss Zarinka, against a restaurantful of people who can see. The only way I can free Chick is to bring Amy Arden's murderer into the open. Unless I'm mistaken, I'll do it tonight. I hope to find \$130,000 which your

brother concealed—along with the evidence against Benny Hoefle! I'm sure your brother kept the evidence, for it was his only protection against death. That's why I'm equally sure that Benny Hoefle didn't kill him."

"And if you find it? What then, Captain Maclain? You still have no proof."

"No," said Maclain, "no proof—but unless I misjudge the man I'm after, I'll have something better, Miss Zarinka—*bait!*"

Chapter Thirty-two: THE LAST EXPRESS

THE slotted streets of New York's financial district, black with a human swarm during the day, are amazingly deserted by night. From eight to nine o'clock each morning of the week incoming thousands move in and up. They converge in millions upon a section scarcely larger than one of the myriad small towns which most of them had left for the city. To house them and their work, to bring them there and take them away, New York was forced to provide space above and below the streets.

During the day each Brobdingnagian building is a city in itself, its speedy elevators, local and express, under the direction of a skillful starter, moving with the regularity and precision of a railroad. The superintendent of such a building must be a man of wide and varied knowledge. Under his supervision are great power plants, gigantic boilers, intricate machinery. He must allocate his available space with care. The tenants of his building must have a place to eat without facing inclement weather, to buy clothes, tobacco, haircuts, reading material—in fact, most of life's necessities—

without leaving the confines of the building where they work.

Finally, space became so scarce on the street level that retail stores were forced underground. The New York worker today eats, drinks, shops, and sometimes attends a picture show underneath the level of the sidewalk.

At five o'clock in the evening the tide turns, and the exodus begins. The traffic is routed down and out. The millions disappear, shooting under streets and rivers, packed into steel torpedoes tighter than the letters of the U. S. mail. Speeding by subway underground, by bus on the street level, by ferries large enough to move an average small town over the river, and by elevated train overhead, they are soon absorbed by New Jersey, Staten Island, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Westchester.

Shops and restaurants, thronged by day, begin to close. By nine o'clock at night a visitor to the subterranean depths would walk alone through brightly lighted passageways, flanked by the bare, dumb stare of semidarkened plate-glass windows bearing names.

There are such visitors, for work never stops in the city. A new crew moves in at night—a tithe of the daytime workers, but considerable nevertheless. They prepare the field for the following day. Lights wink on to disclose night auditors, newspapermen, janitors and scrub women, busy at their tasks. Later, as the transportation demands decrease, the subway expresses, which stop only at every fifth or sixth station, cease to run. The locals continue all night, bearing the brunt, crowded to capacity.

A few restaurants in the financial district remain open. The nocturnal workers must be fed.

New York is deadened, but never, day or night, entirely dead.

Maclain had arranged for the six of them to meet shortly after midnight in the great underground Automat Restaurant on Park Row. It stayed open until three and was always crowded. He and Spud were the first to arrive. Dearborn and Springer arrived shortly after.

Over their coffee, while they waited for Hewitt and Fox, Maclain outlined his plans.

"I don't care whether we're followed or not," he said in conclusion. "If Hewitt and Fox have succeeded in finding anything that looks promising, we're going to cover our route so carefully that anyone trailing us won't have a chance. I was afraid that Schnucke would be more of a hindrance than a help—so Spud will have to stick close to me. I want Springer to cover our rear. If we get into any passageways where there are right-angle turns, he can wait for us as we go around each corner and let us go on ahead until you go back to get him."

"How do I know who to stop?" Springer asked.

"Don't stop anyone," Dearborn said. "Just keep track of them. I'll leave it to your judgment. You certainly know a shadow when you see one."

Springer gulped his coffee and said, "Okay," then relapsed into his usual watchful silence. His eyes were already searching the tables in the crowded restaurant.

Hewitt was the first to come, but his report was not encouraging. He had covered the passages under every building for three or four blocks on the west side of Broadway. Only one door looked promising to him. It was one floor underground, in the basement of a

building just north of Warren Street, and was marked *No Admittance*. He found it unlocked, but apparently there was nothing inside except drums of cable which controlled the elevators. Gilbert Fox joined them just after Hewitt was through speaking, and the story was repeated again.

Fox shook his head. "I don't know, Maclain. I've spent the time since I left your office talking with one of the best tunnel men we have at the New York Electric. He called up a friend of his with the telephone company. Their opinion was that there might be lots of unknown vaults, pockets and tunnels in this section of the city. As the subways were built, and new pipe lines and wires laid, the old discarded shafts were sealed up and forgotten. A portion of the conduit blueprint which Zarinka traced shows several that lead down under the subway tracks—but there's no indication that a remnant of Beach's subway still remains."

"Still," said Maclain with confidence, "I believe it does. For a starter, let's go and have a look at Mr. Hewitt's door."

"Two things we want to avoid," Spud warned. "Police and reporters."

"And friends of Mr. Hoefle," said Dearborn. "Keep your eyes peeled, Springer."

They left by threes so as not to be too conspicuous, crossed City Hall Park, and joined forces near a row of public telephone booths in the basement of the building Hewitt had listed. Four shops, a closed newsstand and the phone booths formed the L of a tunnel. The long part of it ran down under Broadway for two blocks, crossing under Murray Street, and eventually formed an entrance to the City Hall Station of the B.

M. T. Subway.

At Murray Street the lighted, tile-walled passage ducked down farther underground. Springer waited behind by the phone booths as agreed.

The door to the elevator control room was at the bottom of the dip, a place Hewitt estimated to be directly under the center of Murray Street.

As they stopped and the echoes of their own footsteps died away, a short intense silence followed. The city above them became distant and remote; shut out, but omnipresent. Undisturbed, it ignored them, as a great dragon might ignore microscopic organisms moving about in its vitals.

The hush was broken by a clang and whirl inside the door as an elevator far overhead carried a late cleaner from floor to floor. Fox walked farther on down the passageway to guard against interruptions. Hewitt opened the door, and Spud carefully guided the captain inside, warning him to stoop, as the door was lower than average.

They were standing beside a complicated mass of machinery. Spud's flashlight lighted it up and moved to a small electric bulb hanging overhead. He turned it on and jumped back, startled. Close behind him a magnetic control switch closed with a flash and crackle. One of the gigantic drums began to rotate swiftly, paying off heavy cable.

Maclain, always under iron control, remained motionless, without a sign of being startled. He felt Spud's jump and said:

"We're in an elevator control room, Spud. If you can't do better than that, I'll have to send uptown for Schnucke."

"She's welcome to the job," Spud assured him warmly. "I thought I was about to start upstairs by the seat of my pants."

Dearborn chuckled and added,

"These things are twice as bad, Maclain, when you can see them."

"What's on the other side of the room?" the captain asked.

"More drums," said Spud, "and oil. Lots of oil."

"I mean on the wall, Spud. Suppose you take a look, Mr. Hewitt. If there's a way out—" His speech was blotted out by a roar, and the room trembled slightly. It lasted but an instant, and Maclain continued, unmoved, "We're right beside the subway tracks. There won't be any door over there. Try to our left, Mr. Hewitt."

The engineer picked his way through the 20-foot morass of cogs and cables. He fought his voice to keep it steady when he announced, "There's a hinged iron plate set in the wall. It's about four feet square. Shall I open it?"

"Wait," Maclain cautioned. "Where's the canary?"

"Fox has it," said Spud.

"Well, you'd better get him—and you might go for Springer, Claude, and post him outside this door in the passage. I don't think we'll be disturbed from any other direction."

Hewitt stood silent as he waited by Maclain for the others to return. He was face to face with a feat impossible to assimilate. He had spent years dealing with the cold science of figures, and the percentage against Maclain's success was too high to be computed; yet he knew that door in the wall was an access door, lead-

ing into a wire conduit big enough to accommodate a man. Where it went to, he didn't know, but he was most anxious to find out. Spud, Fox and Dearborn returned quickly, for excitement sent them back on the run.

Fox looked at the door and said admiringly, "By George, I believe you're right, Captain Maclain."

"If I am," said Maclain, "Claude and I owe you gentlemen a thousand thanks. I know I must be very close to right. The problem is not as difficult as it seems, for Beach's subway covered only a block of the city. Don't forget that if Paul Zarinka got in it, somehow he found it. He left us a most valuable clue."

Hewitt was still skeptical when he opened the door just wide enough to place the caged canary inside.

"How long?" asked Dearborn.

"Ten minutes should be enough," Fox told him.

It dragged leadenly, punctuated twice by the startling flash and movement of the cable drums. When Hewitt removed the bird they crowded as close about him as they could get in the confined space.

"I guess we can go in, Dunc," Spud said unhappily. "The darned thing's still alive and hopping around."

Fox led the way on hands and knees, and Maclain brought up the rear, guided by an occasional touch of Spud's coattails. They were in a tube not over four feet in diameter, but Fox knew that farther on it would widen out to where a short man could stand by stooping. Maclain kept his hands on the floor, for Fox warned them the place was full of wires carrying high voltage, and that electric leaks might prove perilous. The shaft led straight on for 20 feet, without a break. There it was crossed at right angles by another and

larger one.

Spud's light touched a roof and siding of wire so thick a toothpick could scarcely have been inserted between them. Suspended from the top by iron rods was a clump of five large pipes which might have been carrying water or gas.

"Thank God they're not steam," Spud thought, "or we'd be in for a baking instead of a roasting."

At the juncture of the tunnels Fox stopped and described their surroundings. Without hesitation MacLain directed him to take the one to the right. "We have to bear in toward Broadway, Mr. Fox, but go carefully. There may be a drop down under the subway tracks."

They had not gone 30 feet before MacLain proved he was not guessing. The tunnel narrowed and fell away sharply. The captain refused to proceed without another test made with the canary.

"Gas sometimes collects at the bottom," he said. "I'd feel safer if two of you would fasten your belts together, loop them onto the cage, and let it slide down ahead."

Another ten minutes of silence followed, pierced by a distant monotonous drip of water and the nearer rumble of a train. The canary proved unharmed, but after the slow descent down the sharp incline Fox paused and called back, "There's a faint smell of illuminating gas down here, but it didn't seem to hurt the bird."

"I think we can go on," said MacLain. "I smelled it clear back to where we made the turn. That's why I asked you to test."

Dearborn's voice came out of the darkness. "I

wonder if I could coax you into going quail hunting with me sometime, Maclain. I'll do the shooting, and you do the smelling!"

At the bottom of the incline the character of the tunnel changed. All of them were able to stand by slightly bending their heads. The narrow part ran between huge pipes placed closely on each side. The wires had thinned out over their heads, disappearing in bunches on each side through tubes of strong insulation. Maclain began walking, carefully touching the cool iron pipes with the tips of his fingers. Spud and the others were a short way ahead of him when he called on them to wait.

The noise of a speeding train had just sounded deafeningly from above. "Shine your light here, Spud," said Maclain.

He was holding to a small iron bar set unobtrusively between the big pipes.

"Isn't this a ladder leading up?"

Spud slowly slanted the rays toward the top of the tunnel.

"Yes," he said, "it is. There seems to be a manhole or a plate of some kind about ten feet overhead."

"I'll try it," Fox offered. "We might as well see where it goes." He started up the iron rungs between the pipes. At the top of the sixth pipe they gave way to a regular iron ladder set into the bricks. Maclain, in his intentness, started up after the engineer. Fox's feet were on the rung by Maclain's hands when the engineer stopped. "There's a manhole, all right," he said. "Not a round one, but a square trap. I'm going to push it up."

He took another step. The captain, straining every

faculty to listen, heard the faint creak of iron hinges, but as Gilbert Fox started up ahead of him, he heard another sound, growing like a tornado. He judged the engineer must be half through the hole above, staring curiously about.

There was no time for warning cries. With the grip of an expert tackler, he seized Fox around both legs below the knees and, using all his strength, flung himself clear of the ladder, carrying the engineer with him.

They crashed to the floor together, Fox on top.

"What's happened, Maclain?" Dearborn yelled. "For heaven's sake, what's happened?" The noise was so terrific that Dearborn failed to realize he was screaming at the top of his voice. Green devilish lights flashed above, sparkling and crackling through the open hole. Then, suddenly as it had come, the noise and the lights were gone. The tunnel below was silent and black. Maclain climbed painfully to his feet and automatically tried to dust off his clothes.

"I've been a fool many times in my life, but never such a one as now. We're on the right track—and it's a subway track. Paul Zarinka took the same route we've just followed—climbed this same ladder—and went out the manhole overhead. A similar trap door leading down to the remnants of Beach's subway probably lies not ten feet away! We'll find, like the one above, that it's located right in the middle of the express tracks of the B. M. T.—for the B. M. T. Subway was built over Beach's subway. *That* was the rest of Paul Zarinka's message. 'Don't try to get in there early at night—don't try to get in there before the last express!'"

Chapter Thirty-three: FINAL CURTAIN

MACLAIN was wakeful. A high summer gale was blowing around the penthouse. Even with the soundproofed windows, his sensitive ears received the annoying noise of its constant roar. Fighting for sleep, he succeeded in losing it entirely.

He got out of bed and adjusted the thermostat on the wall. The air conditioning was not functioning properly, and, despite the heat outside, he found the room too chilly.

He returned to the bed and pulled a light spread over him, but sleep was more elusive than ever. The events of the past few days kept writhing through his mind. They merged into a series of vivid colors which he could never see—like the passing of a circus parade in the dark, tangible only through sound and smell. He had fought a long uphill fight and won, but the winning had not left him unscathed. At least, his last battle was one to remember. A battle which brought to him visions of colors he had not seen for years—blues, greens, purples, and red—the deep red of blood on the soft body of Amy Arden.

The dance of flames was there, too—and smells. Terrible smells of singeing hair, blistering wood and choking smoke. Also present was the strange warm odor of the subway—the not unpleasant ozone of a million or more wires carrying great power to keep a city alive. Ozone mixed faintly with illuminating gas. Most vivid of all, perhaps, was the dank mustiness of Beach's subway—the smell of a crypt where a dream lay buried, where a man with vision had run his first,

and last, express.

He lived again the short perilous journey from trap door to trap door along the express tracks—watching constantly for another train, avoiding the covered third rail loaded with electrical death.

Luckily, the train which nearly killed Fox was the last express for the night.

He could still feel under his fingers the touch of the crumbling ancient car and the molding, rotting seat which Paul Zarinka considered so safe a place of concealment. He had been blind in the face of Paul's warning himself, nearly as blind as those around him—but the obvious thing was always the most difficult to see.

Spud had read to him Paul Zarinka's notes on the Hoefle case. They cleared up the rest of the fog. It was always so pitiful when a brilliant mind like Zarinka's strayed into the labyrinth of crime—a labyrinth more complicated and dangerous than any to be found under the city.

Those notes of Paul Zarinka's would provide plenty of work for the police. They were as clear before MacLain as printed words, though he had heard them but once:

Notes on the Case of the

PEOPLE VS. BENJAMIN HOEFLE, ET AL

1. Present to the grand jury the attached agreement between Benny Hoefle and Trilby and Shane, a firm of private detectives, whereby the said Trilby and Shane, for the sum of \$10,000, agreed to employ thugs to beat up and intimidate Tom Delancey.
2. The dancer—Amy Arden. She got the goods on Hoefle and stole the agreement from his safe. Note: Bring out to the grand jury that Hoefle forced Trilby and Shane to sign this

and turn it over to him to protect himself from their squawk.

That was worth \$300,000 to Hoefle, thought Maclain. Breaking into his thoughts, the buzzer of the telephone sounded close beside his bed.

"The D. A.'s here to see you," said the sleepy voice of the night man from downstairs. "Shall I bring him up?"

"Yes," said Maclain, "bring him up."

He reached for the Swiss repeater watch beside his bed. It tinkled 3:45. He slipped on his dressing gown, pushed his feet into sandals, and quietly went into the office. There he turned on the lights and took his place behind the desk to wait.

He heard the click as the automatic elevator stopped. A warm body moved close by his leg. "Lie down," he said firmly.

The door of the office opened and closed, without a preliminary knock. Maclain smiled pleasantly and said:

"Sit down, gentlemen. It's rather late for a call."

He gave no sign that he had heard the sound of the safety bolt pushed home on the door.

The first man in crossed the room and boldly turned the key in the lock of the door which led to Rena's office. The captain smiled contentedly again. He had solved the source of the familiar sound—that illusive sound, like a haunting name, which had bothered him for days.

It was nothing more than a footstep, familiar because he had heard it once before—passing in back of his chair at the table where Amy Arden was killed. The room was ominously quiet.

"Make yourselves comfortable, gentlemen. It's rather

informal—don't you think—to come in without knocking."

The youth in the corner nearest to the hall door took out a comb and carefully brushed back his sleek blond hair. His filmy round eyes widened with surprise.

"Listen, dead blinks," he said softly, "you better hope we go out the same way."

The man nearer the desk hitched his chair forward and said fiercely, "Shut up. If you don't let me handle this—you may not go out at all." He moved around closer to the captain. "You know why we're here, Maclain. We want that money you got tonight—and the evidence you have on Hoeffle."

"That would be rather foolish of me, wouldn't it—since it's the only thing that keeps you from killing me now?"

Maclain moved slightly.

"Put your hands down flat on the top of the desk and keep them there," the man ordered. "My friend's got a gun muffled in a handkerchief. It won't be heard outside of your soundproof room. It's trained on your head right now, and I wouldn't advise you to try anything."

The captain complied. He had good reason to know that no gun was trained on his forehead; in fact, that no gun was in sight. He could leave that with confidence to the dog by his side.

"Now, talk," the man continued. "We want the combination to that safe back of the paneling in the corner."

"Why didn't you bring along a hand grenade?" asked Maclain. "You might have blown it open like

you blew up Zarinka."

"What do you mean by that?" The voice was deadly.

Maclain sighed. "I suppose you'll *have* to kill me now—since I know who you are. It's a pity, too, for you're really very clever."

There was a hypnotic assurance in Maclain's speech which kept him master of the situation. He had every appearance of being utterly relaxed, but not for an instant did he forget that he had never been in greater peril. "Yes," he continued, "I have so much on you that you almost have to kill me. It never could have been anyone but you—from the time your incendiary friend in the corner double-crossed Hoeffle and brought you the information that Paul Zarinka had sold out."

"What's the combination?" the threatening voice in front of the desk repeated.

"I'll give it to you when I get ready," said Maclain. "Not before. You were the only one who had access to everything in the D.A.'s office—the only one who could get a Mills hand grenade from the Police Department's arsenal—the only one who wasn't conspicuous wearing a coat in the Hi-de-Ho Club, to cover the stains of Amy Arden's blood—the only one always present, and never *considered*, because we were so used to you. You killed Paul because the governor's investigation was coming on—and because he'd held out on you the money you expected to get. You were afraid, under pressure, he'd talk. Then you thought of the girl—Amy Arden. You knew her history—with Delancey—Hoeffle—and Zarinka, and you guessed the truth. You went to her to confirm it, telling her you came from Paul. Cleverly you wormed out of her the

facts of the agreement between Hoefle and Trilby and Shane, and that she'd taken the agreement from Hoefle's safe. That was a mistake, wasn't it? With Paul dead—and the governor's investigation under way—she'd wonder why you kept so quiet. And you had to kill her!”

Madonna, sitting fascinated in the corner, began to squirm. Time was fleeting, and he was keen to feel it. There was a night attendant who had announced them by phone and brought them up in the elevator to be taken care of before morning. Once before the same helpless blind man seated at the desk had stood between him and fortune. Now he was calmly killing their chances with words, an endless stream of words—cunningly playing for time.

“Why don't you make him talk sense?” Madonna spat out suddenly. “Why do you want to sit there like a lunk and listen? There're ways of making him cough up that combination—and none of them make pleasant dying.”

“Yes, why not make me talk?” The captain's voice was still even and untroubled. “I'll be glad to give you the combination—and the money's in there, too: \$130,000! Unfortunately, you can't get it even if I tell you the combination.”

“I'll take a chance,” said the man in front of the desk. “I've taken plenty already. You're too smart for your own good, Captain Duncan Maclain—but you've handled your last case. Don't think I overlooked all the checking that went on about lights in the Hi-de-Ho. I did some myself, you know. My mistake was not bumping you off along with the girl. I'm not afraid of the entire department—but I am afraid of you. I'm still

giving you a choice. You can give us the combination and die quickly, or you can keep it to yourself—and die Madonna's way. Either way, you're just as dead. Whatever you decide, I know which way to jump."

"It's good to know which way to jump," said Maclain, "when you have to get away from a dog."

The man in front of the desk laughed. "That's a fine bluff, Captain, a swell bluff—but this time it won't go across."

Fear struck like a bolt into the craven thing Madonna called a soul. Under the desk something moved and stood up—the one stark terror of Madonna's life.

For the last time in his murderous career he spoiled a careful plan. His handkerchief-wrapped hand whipped from his pocket, and a gun coughed dully in the confines of the office.

The bullet struck Maclain. Slowly he crumpled over the desk, hands wide spread.

Dreist attacked like light. Madonna fired again, but he fired wildly at a speeding, dodging lump of brown fury. Teeth were in his wrist. He screamed with pain and dropped the gun, searching to find a hold in the shaggy throat. The dog was gone again and back, clamping down on the other hand until blood spurted free. Madonna fell to the floor and rolled. The dog had him by the arm again. The man in front of the desk sat graven. Running feet sounded outside, and someone was beating at the door. Covered by Dreist's attack, Maclain's elbow had found the row of buttons unobserved.

"I'll let your friends in," said the man. "They can go down along with you. I've shot my way out of tighter places than this. With them dead, nobody will be left

to talk!"

"Except the Ediphone," Maclain said weakly and relaxed on the desk.

From the other side of the room a new voice spoke. Startled beyond control, the man in front of the desk swung in his chair and fired.

"When you hear the signal," said the voice, "the time will be—four-seventeen and one quarter."

It was the last thing he ever heard, for Maclain, moving even swifter than Dreist, straightened up.

His flat .32 was in his hand. Cool and calculating, he shot, judging by the report. He aimed slightly below it and for the left of the man who had just fired.

His visitor slipped from the chair to the floor, shot cleanly through the heart.

Gun in hand, Maclain came around the desk, bent over and touched him briefly.

Ignoring the weeping youth on the floor, safely guarded by Dreist, Maclain pressed a handkerchief over the shoulder wound which was staining his white pajamas. He admitted the frantic Spud and Rena and said:

"You'd better phone Claude Dearborn, Spud. While you're at it, get a doctor. Dreist's playmate got me in the shoulder—but the man I really wanted to get is dead!"

The D. A., white and shaken, followed on the heels of the doctor.

"I don't get it, Maclain," he admitted when he viewed the corpse on the floor.

"And I probably wouldn't have—if I'd have been able to see." The captain winced under the surgeon's probe. "You were so used to him, and he probably

looked so big and dumb. But to me, once I had him under suspicion, his very failure to speak indicated his brains and how much he heard. Most criminals trap themselves by talking. He was so close to you, Claude, that at first I thought it was you."

"Great heavens!" said Dearborn. "That's terrible, Maclain!"

"It is," the captain agreed. "But I couldn't solve two things: You had a perfect alibi the night Paul was killed—for you spent the evening at Tammany Hall. Springer was on guard outside—except for the time he took off to run downtown on the subway and finish Paul! Then another thing was a phone call which came for you at the restaurant—a false one, I'm sure—to get you away from the table long enough for the girl to be stabbed. It happened you'd gone out for the doctor, and I forgot to tell you. I have enough evidence on the Ediphone records to free Chick tomorrow. And there's enough in my safe, as you know, to clean up Trilby and Shane—and bring Hoefle back to town! The genial gunman with the fancy name is still in the other room playing dead dog for Dreist. Take him away with you when you go, for he uses scented soap."

"I can never thank you, Maclain—never," said Dearborn warmly. "Not in a thousand years!"

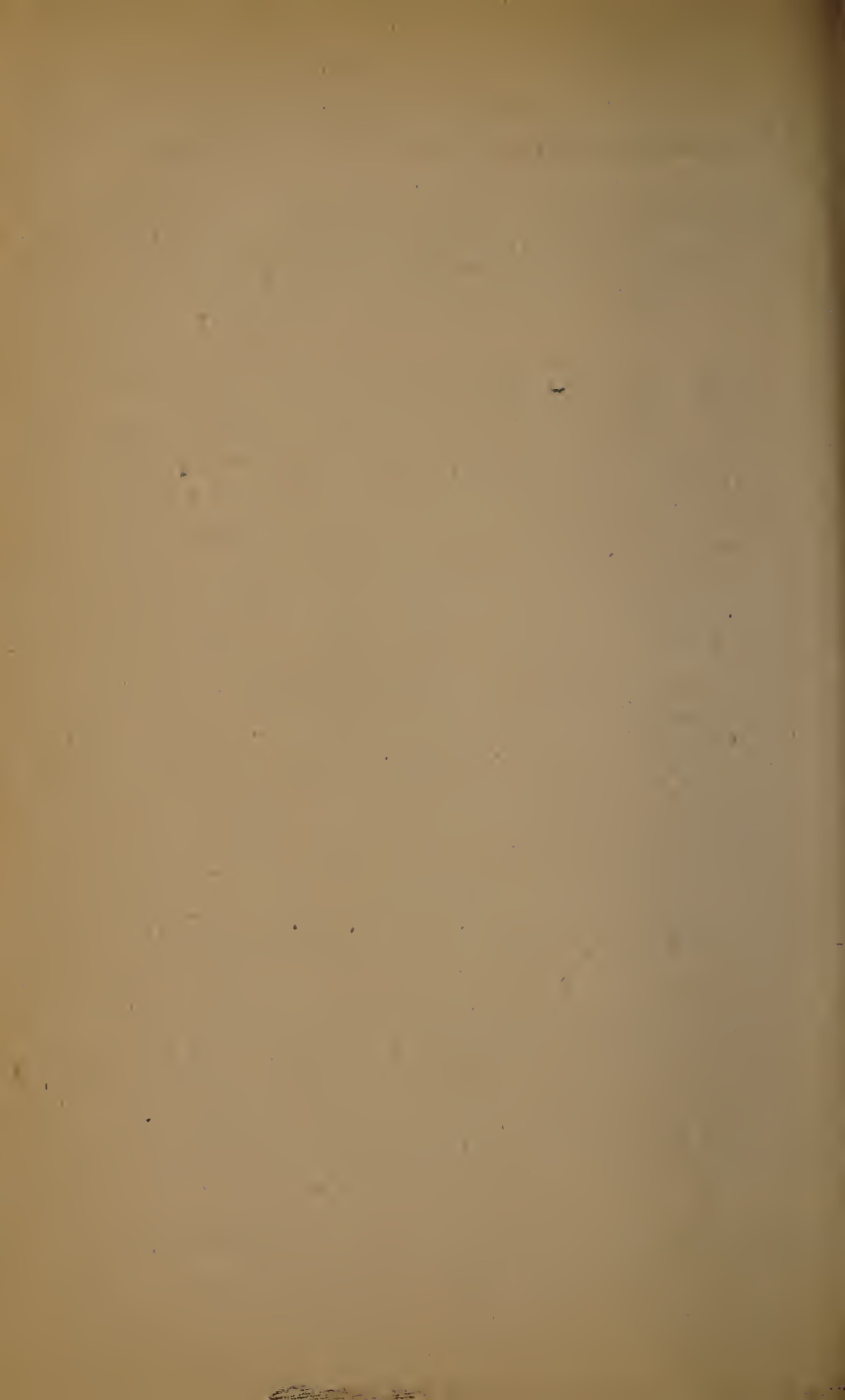
"But you can with a thousand dollars—and your check goes to the Seeing Eye, for I'm through with detective work, Claude—this time I've taken the 'last express.'"

Spud, standing by the bed, bent over the captain. "What was the last, Dunc?" he demanded.

"I said I was through," repeated Duncan Maclain.

"Finished with detective work—forever. It's your business from now on, Spud—for me it's the 'last express.'"

"Thank God," said Spud fervently, "that the express trains start running again tomorrow!"





A
DELL
BOOK

The Hi-de-Ho Night Club Scene of a Murder in "The Last Express"



ON WONG
LAUNDRY

BROWNSTONE
HOUSE

SHED

HI-DE-HO
BACKYARD

HI-DE-HO
CLUB

HOUSE OWNED
BY HOEFLE

FIVE STORY
BRICK BLDG.

D. MACLAIN
DEARBORN

CHICK AND
EVELYN

MISS KELLOGG

HEWITT'S

TRILBY AND
SHAYNE

HOUSE OWNED
BY HOEFLE

SHERIDAN
SQUARE

HI-DE-HO
NIGHT CLUB